

# 1 *Introduction: narrating the nation*

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Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation — or narration — might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress, the narcissism of self-generation, the primeval present of the *Volk*. Nor have such political ideas been definitively superseded by those new realities of internationalism, multinationalism, or even 'late capitalism', once we acknowledge that the rhetoric of these global terms is most often underwritten in that grim prose of power that each nation can wield within its own sphere of influence. What I want to emphasize in that large and liminal image of the nation with which I began is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it. It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the 'origins' of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. Benedict Anderson, whose *Imagined Communities* significantly paved the way for this book, expresses the nation's ambivalent emergence with great clarity:

The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. . . . [Few] things were (are) suited to this end better than the idea of nation. If nation states are widely considered to be 'new' and 'historical', the nation states to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past and . . . glide into a limitless future. What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which — as well as against which — it came into being. (19)

The nation's 'coming into being' as a system of cultural signification, as

the representation of social life rather than the discipline of social *polity*, emphasizes this instability of knowledge. For instance, the most interesting accounts of the national idea, whether they come from the Tory Right, the Liberal high ground, or the New Left, seem to concur on the ambivalent tension that defines the 'society' of the nation. Michael Oakeshott's 'Character of a modern European state' is perhaps the most brilliant conservative account of the equivocal nature of the modern nation. The national space is, in his view, constituted from competing dispositions of human association as *societas* (the acknowledgement of moral rules and conventions of conduct) and *universitas* (the acknowledgement of common purpose and substantive end). In the absence of their merging into a new identity they have survived as competing dogmas — *societas cum universitate* — 'imposing[ing] a particular ambivalence upon all the instructions of a modern state and a specific ambiguity upon its vocabulary of discourse'.<sup>1</sup> In Hannah Arendt's view, the society of the nation in the modern world is 'that curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance' and the two realms flow unceasingly and uncertainly into each other 'like waves in the never-ending stream of the life-process itself'.<sup>2</sup> No less certain is Tom Nairn, in naming the nation 'the modern Janus', that the 'uneven development' of capitalism inscribes both progression and regression, political rationality and irrationality in the very genetic code of the nation. This is a structural fact to which there are no exceptions and 'in this sense, it is an exact (not a rhetorical) statement about nationalism to say that it is by nature ambivalent'.<sup>3</sup>

It is the cultural representation of this ambivalence of modern society that is explored in this book. If the ambivalent figure of the nation is a problem of its transitional history, its conceptual indeterminacy, its wavering between vocabularies, then what effect does this have on narratives and discourses that signify a sense of 'nationness': the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth, the *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other; the comfort of social belonging, the hidden injuries of class; the customs of taste, the powers of political affiliation; the sense of social order, the sensibility of sexuality; the blindness of bureaucracy, the strait insight of institutions; the quality of justice, the common sense of injustice; the *langue* of the law and the *parole* of the people.

The emergence of the political 'rationality' of the nation as a form of narrative — textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative strategems — has its own history.<sup>4</sup> It is suggested in Benedict Anderson's view of the space and time of the modern nation as embodied in the narrative culture of the realist novel, and explored in Tom Nairn's reading of Enoch Powell's post-imperial racism which is based on the 'symbol-fetishism' that infests his feeble, neo-romantic poetry. To encounter the nation as it is *written* displays a temporality of culture and social consciousness more in tune with the partial, overdetermined process by which textual meaning is produced through the articulation of difference in language; more in keeping with the problem of closure which plays cruditely in the discourse of the sign. Such an approach

contests the traditional authority of those national objects of knowledge — Tradition, People, the Reason of State, High Culture, for instance — whose pedagogical value often relies on their representation as holistic concepts located within an evolutionary narrative of historical continuity. Traditional histories do not take the nation at its own word, but, for the most part, they do assume that the problem lies with the interpretation of 'events' that have a certain transparency or privileged visibility.

To study the nation through its narrative address does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric; it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself. If the problematic 'closure' of textuality questions the 'totalization' of national culture, then its positive value lies in displaying the wide dissemination through which we construct the field of meanings and symbols associated with national life. This is a project that has a certain currency within those forms of critique associated with 'cultural studies'. Despite the considerable advance this represents, there is a tendency to read the Nation rather restrictively; either, as the ideological apparatus of state power, somewhat redefined by a hasty, functionalist reading of Foucault or Bakhtin; or, in a more utopian inversion, as the incipient or emergent expression of the 'national-popular' sentiment preserved in a radical memory. These approaches are valuable in drawing our attention to those easily obscured, but highly significant, recesses of the national culture from which alternative constituencies of peoples and oppositional analytic capacities may emerge — youth, the everyday, nostalgia, new 'ethnicities', new social movements, 'the politics of difference'. They assign new meanings and different directions to the process of historical change. The most progressive development from such positions take a *discursive* conception of ideology — ideology (like language) is conceptualised in terms of the articulation of elements. As Vlososov said, the ideological sign is always multi-accidental and Janus-faced.<sup>5</sup> But in the heat of political argument the 'doubling' of the sign can often be stilled. The Janus face of ideology is taken at face value and its meaning fixed, in the last instance, on one side of the divide between ideology and 'material conditions'.

It is the project of *Nation and Narration* to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation. This turns the familiar two-faced god into a figure of prodigious doubling that investigates the nation-space in the *process* of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are in *medias res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made; and the image of cultural authority may be ambivalent because it is caught, uncertainly, in the act of 'composing' its powerful image. Without such an understanding of the performativity of language in the narratives of the nation, it would be difficult to understand why Edward Said prescribes a kind of 'analytic pluralism' as the *form* of critical attention appropriate to the cultural effects of the nation. For the nation, as a form of cultural *elaboration* (in the Gramscian sense), is an agency of *ambivalent* narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for 'subordination, fracturing, diffusing,

reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding'.<sup>6</sup> I wrote to my contributors with a growing, if unfamiliar, sense of the nation as one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representations of 'modernity'. My intention was that we should develop, in a nice collaborative tension, a range of readings that engaged the insights of poststructuralist theories of narrative knowledge — textuality, discourse, enunciation, *écriture*, 'the unconscious as a language' to name only a few strategies — in order to evoke this ambivalent margin of the nation-space. To reveal such a margin is, in the first instance, to contest claims to cultural supremacy, whether these are made from the 'old' post-imperialist metropolitan nations, or on behalf of the 'new' independent nations of the periphery. The marginal or 'minority' is not the space of a celebratory, or utopian, self-marginalization. It is a much more substantial intervention into those justifications of modernity — progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past — that rationalize the authoritarian, 'normalizing' tendencies within cultures in the name of the national interest or the ethnic prerogative. In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as 'containing' thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production.

The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself; nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unnamed sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. The address to nation as narration stresses the insistence of political power and cultural authority in what Derrida describes as the 'irreducible excess of the syncretic over the semantic'.<sup>7</sup> What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. It is from such narrative positions between cultures and nations, theories and texts, the political, the poetic and the painterly, the past and the present, that *Nation and Narration* seeks to affirm and extend Frantz Fanon's revolutionary credo: 'National consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension'.<sup>8</sup> It is this *international* dimension both within the margins of the nation-space and in the boundaries *in-between* nations and peoples that the authors of this book have sought to represent in their essays. The representative emblem of this book might be a chiasmatic 'figure' of cultural difference whereby the anti-nationalist, ambivalent nation-space becomes the crossroads to a new transnational culture. The 'other' is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously 'between ourselves'.

Without attempting to précis individual essays, I would like briefly to elaborate this movement, within *Nation and Narration*, from the problematic unity of the nation to the articulation of cultural difference in the construction of an *international* perspective. The story could start in many places: with David Simpson's reading of the multiform 'body' of Whitman's American populism and his avoidance of metaphor which is also an avoidance of the problems of integration and cultural difference; or Doris Sommer's exploration of the language of love and productive sexuality that allegorizes and organizes the early historical narratives of Latin America which are disavowed by the later 'Boom' novelists; or John Barrell's exploration of the tensions between the civic humanist theory of painting and the 'discourse of custom' as they are drawn together in the ideology of the 'ornamental' in art, and its complex mediation of Englishness; or Sneja Guew's portrayal of an Australian literature split between an Anglo-Celtic public sphere and a multiculturalist counter-public sphere. It is the excluded voices of migrants and the marginalized that Guew represents, bringing them back to disturb and interrupt the writing of the Australian canon.

In each of these 'foundational fictions' the origins of national traditions turn out to be as much acts of affiliation and establishment as they are moments of disavowal, displacement, exclusion, and cultural contestation. In this function of national history as *Entstellung*, the forces of social antagonism or contradiction cannot be transcended or dialectically surmounted. There is a suggestion that the constitutive contradictions of the national text are discontinuous and 'interruptive'.<sup>9</sup> This is Geoff Bennington's starting point as he puns (with a certain postmodern precision) on the 'postal politics' of national frontiers to suggest that 'Frontiers are articulations, boundaries are, constitutively, crossed and transgressed'. It is across such boundaries, both historical and pedagogical, that Martin Thom places Renan's celebrated essay 'What is a nation?'. He provides a careful genealogy of the national idea as it emerges mythically from the Germanic tribes, and more recently in the interrelations between the struggle to consolidate the Third Republic and the emergence of Durkheimian sociology.

What kind of a cultural space is the nation with its transgressive boundaries and its 'interruptive' interiority? Each essay answers this question differently but there is a moment in Simon Düring's exposition of the 'civil imaginary' when he suggests that 'part of the modern domination of the life-world by style and civility . . . is a process of the *feminisation* of society'. This insight is explored in two very different contexts, Gillian Beer's reading of Virginia Woolf and Rachel Bowlby's study of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Gillian Beer takes the perspective of the aeroplane — war machine, dream symbol, icon of the 1930s poets — to emphasize Woolf's reflections on the island race, and space; its multiple marginal significations — 'land and water margins, home, body, individualism' — providing another inflection to her quarrels with patriarchy and imperialism. Rachel Bowlby writes the cultural history of readings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, that debate the feminization of American cultural

values while producing a more complex interpretation of her own. The narrative of American freedom, she suggests, displays the same ambivalence that constructs the contradictory nature of femininity in the text. America itself becomes the dark continent, doubly echoing the 'image' of America and Freud's metaphor for feminine sexuality. George Harris, the former slave, leaves for the new African state of Liberia.

It is when the western nation comes to be seen, in Conrad's famous phrase, as one of the dark corners of the earth, that we can begin to explore new places from which to write histories of peoples and construct theories of narration. Each time the question of cultural difference emerges as a challenge to relativistic notions of the diversity of culture, it reveals the margins of modernity. As a result, most of these essays have ended up in another cultural location from where they started — often taking up a 'minority' position. Francis Mulhern's study of the 'English ethics' of Leavisian universalism pushes towards a reading of Q.D. Leavis's last public lecture in Cheltenham where she bemoans the imperilled state of that England which bore the classical English novel; an England, now, of council-house dwellers, unassimilated minorities, sexual emancipation without responsibility. Suddenly the paranoid system of 'English reading' stands revealed. James Snead ends his interrogation of the ethics and aesthetics of western 'nationalist' universalism with a reading of Ishmael Reed who 'is revising a prior co-optation of black culture, using a narrative principle that will undermine the very assumptions that brought the prior appropriation about.' Timothy Brennan produces a panoramic view of the western history of the national idea and its narrative forms, finally to take his stand with those hybridizing writers like Salman Rushdie whose glory and grotesquerie lie in their celebration of the fact that English is no longer an English language. This, as Brennan points out, leads to a more articulate awareness of the post-colonial and neo-colonial conditions as authoritative positions from which to speak Janus-faced to east and west. But these positions across the frontiers of history, culture, and language, which we have been exploring, are dangerous, if essential, political projects. Bruce Robbins' reading of Dickens balances the risks of departing from the 'ethical home truths' of humanistic experience with the advantages of developing a knowledge of acting in a dispersed global system. Our attention to 'aporia' he suggests, should be counterpoised with an intentionality that is inscribed in *poros* — practical, technical know-how that abjures the rationalism of universalisms, while maintaining the practicality, and political strategy, of dealing professionally with local situations that are themselves defined as liminal and borderline.

America leads to Africa; the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis. The island story is told from the eye of the aeroplane which becomes that 'ornament' that holds the public and the private in suspense. The bastion of Englishness crumbles at the sight of immigrants and factory workers. The great Whitmanesque sensorium of America is exchanged for a

Warhol blowup, a Kruger installation, or Mapplethorpe's naked bodies. 'Magical realism', after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world. Amidst these exorbitant images of the nation-space in its transnational dimension there are those who have not yet found their nation: amongst them the Palestinians and the Black South Africans. It is our loss that in making this book we were unable to add their voices to ours. Their persistent questions remain to remind us, in some form or measure, of what must be true for the rest of us too: 'When did we become "a people"? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? What do these big questions have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others?'<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

- 1 M. Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 201.
- 2 H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), pp. 33–5 and *passim*.
- 3 T. Naum, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 348.
- 4 Patrick Wright's *On Living in an Old Country* (London: Verso, 1985) and Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987) are significant recent contributions to such an approach.
- 5 S. Hall, *The Hand Road to Renewal* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 9.
- 6 E. Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 171.
- 7 J. Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 221.
- 8 F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 199.
- 9 G. Spivak, *In Other Worlds* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 251.
- 10 E. Said, *After the Last Sky* (London, Faber, 1986), p. 34.

## 2 *What is a nation?*

Ernest Renan

(Translated and annotated by Martin Thom)

What I propose to do today is to analyse with you an idea which, though seemingly clear, lends itself to the most dangerous misunderstandings. [Consider] the vast agglomerations of men found in China, Egypt or ancient Babylonia, the tribes of the Hebrews and the Arabs, the city as it existed in Athens or Sparta, the assemblies of the various territories in the Carolingian Empire, those communities which are without a *patrie*<sup>2</sup> and are maintained by a religious bond alone, as is the case with the Israelites and the Parsees, nations, such as France, England and the majority of the modern European sovereign states, confederations, such as exist in Switzerland or in America, and ties, such as those that race, or rather language, establishes between the different branches of the German or Slav peoples. Each of these groupings exist, or have existed, and there would be the direct of consequences if one were to confuse any one of them with any other. At the time of the French Revolution, it was commonly believed that the institutions proper to small, independent cities, such as Sparta and Rome, might be applied to our large nations, which number some thirty or forty million souls. Nowadays, a far graver mistake is made: race is confused with nation and a sovereignty analogous to that of really existing peoples is attributed to ethnographic or, rather linguistic groups.

I want now to try and make these difficult questions somewhat more precise, for the slightest confusion regarding the meaning of words, at the start of an argument, may in the end lead to the most fatal of errors. It is a delicate thing that I propose to do here, somewhat akin to vivisection; I am going to treat the living much as one ordinarily treats the dead. I shall adopt an absolutely cool and impartial attitude.

I

Since the fall of the Roman Empire or, rather, since the disintegration of Charlemagne's empire, western Europe has seemed to us to be divided into nations, some of which, in certain epochs, have sought to wield a hegemony over the others, without ever enjoying any lasting success. It is hardly likely that anyone in the future will achieve what Charles V.

Louis XIV and Napoleon I failed to do. The founding of a new Roman Empire or of a new Carolingian empire would now be impossible. Europe is so divided that any bid for universal domination would very rapidly give rise to a coalition, which would drive any too ambitious nation back to its natural frontiers.<sup>3</sup> A kind of equilibrium has long been established. France, England, Germany and Russia will, for centuries to come, no matter what may befall them, continue to be individual historical units, the crucial pieces on a checkerboard whose squares will forever vary in importance and size but will never be wholly confused with each other.

Nations, in this sense of the term, are something fairly new in history. Antiquity was unfamiliar with them; Egypt, China and ancient Chaldea were in no way nations. They were flocks led by a Son of the Sun or by a Son of Heaven. Neither in Egypt nor in China were there citizens as such. Classical antiquity had republics, municipal kingdoms, confederations of local republics and empires, yet it can hardly be said to have had nations in our understanding of the term. Athens, Sparta, Tyre and Sidon were small centres imbued with the most admirable patriotism, but they were [simply] cities with a relatively restricted territory. Gaul, Spain and Italy, prior to their absorption by the Roman Empire, were collections of clans, which were often allied among themselves but had no central institutions and no dynasties. The Assyrian Empire, the Persian Empire and the empire of Alexander the Great were not *patries* either. There never were any Assyrian patriots, and the Persian Empire was nothing but a vast feudal structure. No nation traces its origins back to Alexander the Great's momentous adventure, fertile though it was in consequences for the general history of civilization.

The Roman Empire was much more nearly a *patrie*. Roman domination, although at first so harsh, was soon loved, for it had brought about the great benefit of putting an end to war. The empire was a huge association, and a synonym for order, peace and civilization. In its closing stages, lofty souls, enlightened bishops, and the educated classes had a real sense of the *Pax Romana*, which withstood the threatening chaos of barbarism. But an empire twelve times larger than present-day France cannot be said to be a state in the modern sense of the term. The split between the eastern and western [empires] was inevitable, and attempts at founding an empire in Gaul, in the third century AD, did not succeed either. It was in fact the Germanic invasions which introduced into the world the principle which, later, was to serve as a basis for the existence of nationalities.

What in fact did the German peoples accomplish, from their great invasions in the fifth century AD up until the final Norman conquests in the tenth century? They effected little change in the racial stock, but they imposed dynasties and a military aristocracy upon the more or less extensive parts of the old empire of the west, which assumed the names of their invaders. This was the origin of France, Burgundy, and Lombardy, and, subsequently, Normandy. The Frankish Empire so rapidly extended its sway that, for a period, it re-established the unity of the west, but it

was irreparably shattered around the middle of the ninth century; the partition of Verdun<sup>4</sup> outlined divisions which were in principle immutable and, from then on, France, Germany, England, Italy, and Spain made their way, by often circuitous paths and through a thousand and one vicissitudes, to their full national existence, such as we see it blossoming today.

What in fact is the defining feature of these different states? It is the fusion of their component populations. In the above mentioned countries, there is nothing analogous to what you will find in Turkey, where Turks, Slavs, Greeks, Armenians, Arabs, Syrians, and Kurds are as distinct today as they were upon the day that they were conquered. Two crucial circumstances helped to bring about this result. First, the fact that the Germanic peoples adopted Christianity as soon as they underwent any prolonged contact with the Greek or Latin peoples. When conqueror or conquered have the same religion or, rather, when the conqueror adopts the religion of the conquered, the Turkish system — that is, the absolute distinction between men in terms of their religion — can no longer arise. The second circumstance was the forgetting, by the conquerors, of their own language. The grandsons of Clovis, Alaric, Gundebald, Alboin, and Roland were already speaking the Roman tongue. This fact was itself the consequence of another important feature, namely, the fact that the Franks, Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, and Normans had very few women of their own race with them. For several generations, the chiefs only married German women; but their concubines were Latin, as were the wet-nurses of their children; the tribe as a whole married Latin women; which meant that, from the time the Franks and the Goths established themselves on Roman territory, the *lingua franca* and the *lingua gothica* did not last too long.

This was not how it was in England, for the invading Saxons undoubtedly brought women with them; the Celtic population took flight, and, besides, Latin was no longer, or rather had never been, dominant in Britain. If Old French had been generally spoken in Gaul in the fifth century Clovis and his people would not have abandoned German for Old French.

The crucial result of all this was that, in spite of the extreme violence of the customs of the German invaders, the mould which they imposed became, with the passing centuries, the actual mould of the nation. 'France' became quite legitimately the name of a country to which only a virtually imperceptible minority of Franks had come. In the tenth century, in the first *chansons de geste*, which are such a perfect mirror of the spirit of the times, all the inhabitants of France are French. The idea, which had seemed so obvious to Gregory of Tours,<sup>5</sup> that the population of France was composed of different races, was in no way apparent to French writers and poets after Hugh Capet. The difference between noble and serf was as sharply drawn as possible, but it was in no sense presented as an ethnic difference; it was presented rather as a difference in courage, customs, and education, all of which were transmitted hereditarily; it did not occur to anyone that the origin of all this was

a conquest. The spurious system according to which nobility owed its origin to a privilege conferred by the king for services rendered to the nation, so that every noble was an ennobled person, was established as a dogma as early as the thirteenth century. The same thing took place after almost all the Norman conquests. After one or two generations, the Norman invaders no longer distinguished themselves from the rest of the population, although their influence was not any less profound because of this fact; they had given the conquered country a nobility, military habits, and a patriotism that they had not known before.

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for the principle of nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial. Unity is always effected by means of brutality; the union of northern France with the Midi was the result of massacres and terror lasting for the best part of a century. Though the king of France was, if I may make so bold as to say, almost the perfect instance of an agent that crystallized [a nation] over a long period; though he established the most perfect national unity that there has ever been, too searching a scrutiny had destroyed his prestige. The nation which he had formed has cursed him, and, nowadays, it is only men of culture who know something of his former value and of his achievements.

It is [only] by contrast that these great laws of the history of western Europe become perceptible to us. Many countries failed to achieve what the King of France, partly through his tyranny, partly through his justice, so admirably brought to fruition. Under the Crown of Saint Stephen, the Magyars and the Slavs have remained as distinct as they were 800 years ago. Far from managing to fuse the diverse [ethnic] elements to be found in its domains, the House of Hapsburg has kept them distinct and often opposed the one to the other. In Bohemia [for instance], the Czech and German elements are superimposed, much like oil and water in a glass. The Turkish policy of separating nationalities according to their religion has had much graver consequences, for it brought about the downfall of the east. If you take a city such as Salonika or Smyrna, you will find there five or six communities each of which has its own memories and which have almost nothing in common. Yet the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale, or a Visigoth, yet every French citizen has to have forgotten the massacre of Saint Bartholomew,<sup>6</sup> or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century. There are not ten families in France that can supply proof of their Frankish origin, and any such proof would anyway be essentially flawed, as a consequence of countless unknown alliances which are liable to disrupt any genealogical system.

The modern nation is therefore a historical result brought about by a

series of convergent facts. Sometimes unity has been effected by a dynasty, as was the case in France; sometimes it has been brought about by the direct will of provinces, as was the case with Holland, Switzerland, and Belgium; sometimes it has been the work of a general consciousness, belatedly victorious over the caprices of feudalism, as was the case in Italy and Germany. These formations always had a profound *raison d'être*. Principles, in such cases, always emerge through the most unexpected surprises. Thus, in our own day, we have seen Italy unified through its defeats and Turkey destroyed by its victories. Each defeat advanced the cause of Italy; each victory spelled doom for Turkey; for Italy is a nation, and Turkey, outside of Asia Minor, is not one. France can claim the glory for having, through the French Revolution, proclaimed that a nation exists of itself. We should not be displeased if others imitate us in this. It was we who founded the principle of nationality. But what is a nation? Why is Holland a nation, when Hanover, or the Grand Duchy of Parma, are not? How is it that France continues to be a nation, when the principle which created it has disappeared? How is it that Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogeneous, is not one? Why is Austria a state and not a nation? In what ways does the principle of nationality differ from that of races? These are points that a thoughtful person would wish to have settled, in order to put his mind at rest. The affairs of this world can hardly be said to be ruled by reasonings of this sort, yet diligent men are desirous of bringing some reason into these matters and of unravelling the confusions in which superficial intelligences are entangled.

## II

If one were to believe some political theorists, a nation is above all a dynasty, representing an earlier conquest, one which was first of all accepted, and then forgotten by the mass of the people. According to a above-mentioned theorist, the grouping of provinces effected by a dynasty, by its wars, its marriages, and its treaties, ends with the dynasty which had established it. It is quite true that the majority of modern nations were made by a family of feudal origin, which had contracted a marriage with the soil and which was in some sense a nucleus of centralization. France's frontiers in 1789 had nothing either natural or necessary about them. The wide zone that the House of Capet had added to the narrow strip of land granted by the partition of Verdun was indeed the personal acquisition of this House. During the epoch when these acquisitions were made, there was no idea of natural frontiers, nor of the rights of nations, nor of the will of provinces. The union of England, Ireland, and Scotland was likewise a dynastic fact. Italy only tarried so long before becoming a nation because, among its numerous reigning houses, none, prior to the present century, constituted itself as the centre of [its] unity. Strangely enough, it was through the obscure island of Sardinia, a land that was scarcely Italian, that [the house of Savoy] assumed a royal

title.<sup>7</sup> Holland, which — through an act of heroic resolution — created itself, has nevertheless contracted an intimate marriage with the House of Orange, and it will run real dangers the day this union is compromised.

Is such a law, however, absolute? It undoubtedly is not. Switzerland and the United States, which have formed themselves, like conglomerates, by successive additions, have no dynastic basis. I shall not discuss this question in relation to France, for I would need to be able to read the secrets of the future in order to do so. Let me simply say that so loftily national had this great French royal principle been that, on the morrow of its fall, the nation was able to stand without her. Furthermore, the eighteenth century had changed everything. Man had returned, after centuries of abasement, to the spirit of antiquity, to *la sensée* of respect for himself, to the idea of his own rights. The words *patrie* and citizen had recovered their former meanings. Thus it was that the boldest operation ever yet put into effect in history was brought to completion, an operation which one might compare with the attempt, in physiology, to restore to its original identity a body from which one had removed the brain and the heart.

It must therefore be admitted that a nation can exist without a dynastic principle, and even that nations which have been formed by dynasties can be separated from them without therefore ceasing to exist. The old principle, which only takes account of the right of princes, could no longer be maintained; apart from dynastic right, there is also national right. Upon what criterion, however, should one base this national right? By what sign should one know it? From what tangible fact can one derive it?

Several confidently assert that it is derived from race. The artificial divisions, resulting from feudalism, from princely marriages, from diplomatic congresses are, [these authors assert], in a state of decay. It is a population's race which remains firm and fixed. This is what constitutes a right, a legitimacy. The Germanic family, according to the theory I am expounding here, has the right to reassemble the scattered limbs of the Germanic order, even when these limbs are not asking to be joined together again. The right of the Germanic order over such-and-such a province is stronger than the right of the inhabitants of that province over themselves. There is thus created a kind of primordial right analogous to the divine right of kings; an ethnographic principle is substituted for a national one. This is a very great error, which, if it were to become dominant, would destroy European civilization. The primordial right of races is as narrow and as perilous for genuine progress as the national principle is just and legitimate.

In the tribes and cities of antiquity, the fact of race was, I will allow, of very real importance. The tribe and the city were then merely extensions of the family. At Sparta and at Athens all the citizens were kin to a greater or lesser degree. The same was true of the Beni-Israelites; this is still the case with the Arab tribes. If we move now from Athens, Sparta, and the Israelite tribe to the Roman Empire the situation is a wholly different one. Established at first through violence but subsequently preserved through [common] interest, this great agglomeration of

cities and provinces, wholly different from each other, dealt the gravest of blows to the idea of race. Christianity, with its universal and absolute character, worked still more effectively in the same direction; it formed an intimate alliance with the Roman Empire and, through the impact of these two incomparable unificatory agents, the ethnographic argument was debarr'd from the government of human affairs for centuries.

The barbarian invasions were, appearances notwithstanding, a further step along this same path. The carving out of the barbarian kingdoms had nothing ethnographic about them, their [shape] was determined by the might or whim of the invaders. They were utterly indifferent to the race of the populations which they had subdued. What Rome had fashioned, Charlemagne refashioned in his own way, namely, a single empire composed of the most diverse races; those responsible for the partition of Verdun, as they calmly drew their two long lines from north to south, were not in the slightest concerned with the race of the peoples to be found on the right or left of these lines. Frontier changes put into effect, as the Middle Ages wore on, likewise paid no heed to ethnographic divisions. If the policies pursued by the House of Capet by and large resulted in the grouping together, under the name of France, of the territories of ancient Gaul, this was only because these lands had a natural tendency to be joined together with their fellows. Dauphiné, Bresse, Provence, and Franche-Comté no longer recalled any common origin. All Gallic consciousness had perished by the second century AD, and it is only from a purely scholarly perspective that, in our own days, the individuality of the Gallic character has been retrospectively recovered.

Ethnographic considerations have therefore played no part in the constitution of modern nations. France is [at once] Celtic, Iberic, and Germanic. Germany is Germanic, Celtic and Slav. Italy is the country where the ethnographic argument is most confounded. Gauls, Etruscans, Pelasgians<sup>8</sup> and Greeks, not to mention many other elements, intersect in an indecipherable mixture. The British isles, considered as a whole, present a mixture of Celtic and Germanic blood, the proportions of which are singularly difficult to define.

The truth is that there is no pure race and that to make politics depend upon ethnographic analysis is to surrender it to a chimera. The noblest countries, England, France, and Italy, are those where the blood is the most mixed. Is Germany an exception in this respect? Is it a purely Germanic country? This is a complete illusion. The whole of the south was once Gallic; the whole of the east, from the river Elbe on, is Slav. Even those parts which are claimed to be really pure, are they in fact so? We touch here on one of those problems in regard to which it is of the utmost importance that we equip ourselves with clear ideas and ward off misconceptions.

Discussions of race are interminable, because philologically-minded historians and physiologically-minded anthropologists interpret the term in two totally different ways.<sup>9</sup> For the anthropologists, race has the same meaning as in zoology; it serves to indicate real descent, a blood relation. However, the study of language and of history does not lead to

the same divisions as does physiology. Words such as brachycephalic or dolichocephalic have no place in either history or philology. In the human group which created the Aryan languages and way of life, there were already [both] brachycephalics and dolichocephalics. The same is true of the primitive group which created the languages and institutions known as Semitic. In other words, the zoological origins of humanity are massively prior to the origins of culture, civilization, and language. The primitive Aryan, primitive Semitic, and primitive Touranian groups had no physiological unity. These groupings are historical facts, which took place in a particular epoch, perhaps 15,000 or 20,000 years ago, while the zoological origin of humanity is lost in impenetrable darkness. What is known philologically and historically as the Germanic race is no doubt a quite distinct family within the human species, but it is a family in the anthropological sense of the term? Certainly not. The emergence of an individual Germanic identity occurred only a few centuries prior to Jesus Christ. One may take it that the Germans did not emerge from the earth at this epoch. Prior to this, mingled with the Slavs in the huge indistinct mass of the Scythians, they did not have their own separate individuality. An Englishman is indeed a type within the whole of humanity. However, the type of what is quite improperly called the Anglo-Saxon race<sup>10</sup> is neither the Briton of Julius Caesar's time, nor the Anglo-Saxon of Hengist's time, nor the Dane of Canute's time, nor the Norman of William the Conqueror's time; it is rather the result of all these [elements]. A Frenchman is neither a Gaul, nor a Frank, nor a Burgundian. Rather, he is what has emerged out of the cauldron in which, presided over by the King of France, the most diverse elements have together been simmering. A native of Jersey or Guernsey differs in no way, as far as his origins are concerned, from the Norman population of the opposite coast. In the eleventh century, even the sharpest eye would have seen not the slightest difference in those living on either side of the Channel. Trifling circumstances meant that Philip Augustus did not seize these islands together with the rest of Normandy. Separated from each other for the best part of 700 years, the two populations have become not only strangers to each other but wholly dissimilar. Race, as we historians understand it, is therefore something which is made and unmade. The study of race is of crucial importance for the scholar concerned with the history of humanity. It has no applications, however, in politics. The instinctive consciousness which presided over the construction of the map of Europe took no account of race, and the leading nations of Europe are nations of essentially mixed blood.

The fact of race, which was originally crucial, thus becomes increasingly less important. Human history is essentially different from zoology, and race is not everything, as it is among the rodents or the felines, and one does not have the right to go through the world fingering people's skulls, and taking them by the throat saying: 'You are of our blood; you belong to us!' Aside from anthropological characteristics, there are such things as reason, justice, the true, and the beautiful, which are the same for all. Be on your guard, for this ethnographic politics is in no way a



stable thing and, if today you use it against others, tomorrow you may see it turned against yourselves. Can you be sure that the Germans, who have raised the banner of ethnography so high, will not see the Slavs in their turn analyse the names of villages in Saxony and Lusatia, search for any traces of the Wilizes or of the Obotrites, and demand recompense for the massacres and the wholesale enslavements that the Ottos inflicted upon their ancestors? It is good for everyone to know how to forget.

I am very fond of ethnography, for it is a science of rare interest; but, in so far as I would wish it to be free, I wish it to be without political application. In ethnography, as in all forms of study, systems change; this is the condition of progress. States' frontiers would then follow the fluctuations of science. Patriotism would depend upon a more or less paradoxical dissertation. One would come up to a patriot and say: 'You were mistaken; you shed your blood for such-and-such a cause; you believed yourself to be a Celt; not at all, you are a German.' Then, ten years later, you will be told that you are a Slav. If we are not to distort science, we should exempt it from the need to give an opinion on these problems, in which so many interests are involved. You can be sure that, if one obliges science to furnish diplomacy with its first principles, one will surprise her many times in *flagrant délit*. She has better things to do; let us simply ask her to tell the truth.

What we have just said of race applies to language too. Language invites people to unite, but it does not force them to do so. The United States and England, Latin America and Spain, speak the same languages yet do not form single nations. Conversely, Switzerland, so well made, since she was made with the consent of her different parts, numbers three or four languages. There is something in man which is superior to language, namely, the will. The will of Switzerland to be united, in spite of the diversity of her dialects, is a fact of far greater importance than a similitude often obtained by various vexatious measures.

An honourable fact about France is that she has never sought to win unity of language by coercive measures. Can one not have the same sentiments and the same thoughts, and love the same things in different languages? I was speaking just now of the disadvantages of making international politics depend upon ethnography; they would be no less if one were to make it depend upon comparative philology. Let us allow these intriguing studies full freedom of discussion; let us not mix them up with matters which would undermine their serenity. The political importance attaching to languages derives from their being regarded as signs of race. Nothing could be more false. Prussia, where only German is now spoken, spoke Slav a few centuries ago; in Wales, English is spoken; Gaul and Spain speak the primitive dialects of Alba Longa; Egypt speaks Arabic; there are countless other examples one could quote. Even if you go back to origins, similarity of language did not presuppose similarity of race. Consider, for example the proto-Aryan or proto-Semitic tribes: there one found slaves speaking the same language as their masters, and yet the slave was often enough a different race to that of his master. Let me repeat that these divisions of the Indo-European, Semitic, or other

languages, created with such admirable sagacity by comparative philology, do not coincide with the divisions established by anthropology. Languages are historical formations, which tell us very little about the blood of those who speak them and which, in any case, could not shackle human liberty when it is a matter of deciding the family with which one unites oneself for life or for death.

This exclusive concern with language, like an excessive preoccupation with race, has its dangers and its drawbacks. Such exaggerations enclose one within a specific culture, considered as national; one limits oneself, one hems oneself in. One leaves the heady air that one breathes in the vast field of humanity in order to enclose oneself in a convective with one's compatriots. Nothing could be worse for the mind; nothing could be more disturbing for civilization. Let us not abandon the fundamental principle that man is a reasonable and moral being, before he is cooped up in such and such a language, before he is a member of such and such a race, before he belongs to such and such a culture. Before French, German, or Italian culture there is human culture. Consider the great men of the Renaissance: they were neither French, nor Italian, nor German. They had rediscovered, through their dealings with antiquity, the secret of the genuine education of the human spirit, and they devoted themselves to it body and soul. What an achievement theirs was!

Religion cannot supply an adequate basis for the constitution of a modern nationality either. Originally, religion had to do with the very existence of the social group, which was itself an extension of the family. Religion and the rites were family rites. The religion of Athens was the cult of Athens itself, of its mythical founders, of its laws and its customs; it implied no theological dogma. This religion was, in the strongest sense of the term, a state religion. One was not an Athenian if one refused to practise it. This religion was, fundamentally, the cult of the Acropolis personified. To swear on the altar of Aglauros<sup>11</sup> was to swear that one would die for the *patrie*. This religion was the equivalent of what the act of drawing lots [for military service], or the cult of the flag, is for us. Refusing to take part in such a cult would be the equivalent, in our modern societies, of refusing military service. It would be like declaring that one was not Athenian. From another angle, it is clear that such a cult had no meaning for someone who was not from Athens; there was also no attempt made to proselytize foreigners and to force them to accept it; the slaves of Athens did not practise it. Things were much the same in a number of small medieval republics. One was not considered a good Venetian if one did not swear by Saint Mark; nor a good Amalfitan if one did not set Saint Andrew higher than all the other saints in paradise. In these small societies, what subsequently was regarded as persecution or tyranny was legitimate and was of no more consequence than our custom of wishing the father of a family happy birthday or a Happy New Year.

The state of affairs in Sparta and in Athens already no longer existed in the kingdoms which emerged from Alexander's conquest, still less in the Roman Empire. The persecutions unleashed by Antiochus Epiphanes

in order win the east for the cult of Jupiter Olympus, those of the Roman Empire designed to maintain a supposed state religion were mistaken, criminal, and absurd. In our own time, the situation is perfectly clear. There are no longer masses that believe in a perfectly uniform manner. Each person believes and practises in his own fashion what he is able to, and as he wishes. There is no longer a state religion; one can be French, English, or German, and be either Catholic, Protestant, or orthodox Jewish, or else practise no cult at all. Religion has become an individual matter; it concerns the conscience of each person. The division of nations into Catholics and Protestants no longer exists. Religion, which, fifty-two years ago, played so substantial a part in the formation of Belgium, preserves all of its [former] importance in the inner tribunal of each; but it has ceased almost entirely to be one of the elements which serve to define the frontiers of peoples.

A community of interest is assuredly a powerful bond between men. Do interests, however, suffice to make a nation? I do not think so. Community of interest brings about trade agreements, but nationality has a sentimental side to it; it is both soul and body at once; a *Zollverein*<sup>12</sup> is not a *patricie*.

Geography, or what are known as natural frontiers, undoubtedly plays a considerable part in the division of nations. Geography is one of the crucial factors in history. Rivers have led races on, mountains have brought them to a halt. The former have favoured movement in history, whereas the latter have restricted it. Can one say, however, that as some parties believe, a nation's frontiers are written on the map and that this nation has the right to judge what is necessary to round off certain contours, in order to reach such and such a mountain and such and such a river, which are thereby accorded a kind of *a priori* limiting faculty? I know of no doctrine which is more arbitrary or more fatal, for it allows one to justify any or every violence. First of all, it is the mountains or the rivers that we should regard as forming these so-called natural frontiers? It is indisputable that the mountains separate, but the rivers tend rather to unify. Moreover, all mountains cannot divide up states. Which serve to separate and which do not? From Biarritz to Tornea, there is no one estuary which is more suited than any other to serving as a boundary marker. Had history so decreed it, the Loire, the Seine, the Meuse, the Elbe, or the Oder could, just as easily as the Rhine, have had this quality of being a natural frontier, such as has caused so many infractions of the most fundamental right, which is men's will. People talk of strategic grounds. Nothing, however, is absolute; it is quite clear that many concessions should be made to necessity. But these concessions should not be taken too far. Otherwise, everybody would lay claim to their military conveniences, and one would have unceasing war. No, it is no more soil than it is race which makes a nation. The soil furnishes the substratum, the field of struggle, and of labour; man furnishes the soul. Man is everything in the formation of this sacred thing which is called a people. Nothing [purely] material suffices for it. A nation is a spiritual principle, the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a

spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of the earth. We have now seen what things are not adequate for the creation of such a spiritual principle, namely, race, language, material interest, religious affinities, geography, and military necessity. What more then is required? As a consequence of what was said previously, I will not have to detain you very much longer.

### III

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improve. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more — these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down. The Spartan song — 'We are what you were; we will be what you are'<sup>13</sup> — is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every *païrie*.

More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. I spoke just now of 'having suffered together' and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.

A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life. That I know full well, is less metaphysical than divine right and less brutal than so-called historical right. According to the ideas that I am outlining to you, a nation has no more right than a king does to say to a province: 'You belong to me, I am seizing you.' A province, as far as I am concerned, is its inhabitants;

if anyone has the right to be consulted in such an affair, it is the inhabitant. A nation never has any real interest in annexing or holding on to a country against its will. The wish of nations is, all in all, the sole legitimate criterion, the one to which one must always return.

We have driven metaphysical and theological abstractions out of politics. What then remains? Man, with his desires and his needs. The secession, you will say to me, and in the long term, the disintegration of nations will be the outcome of a system which places these old organisms at the mercy of wills which are often none too enlightened. It is clear that, in such matters, no principle must be pushed too far. Truths of this order are only applicable as a whole in a very general fashion. Human wills change; but what is there here below that does not change? The nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end. A European confederation will very probably replace them. But such is not the law of the century in which we are living. At the present time, the existence of nations is a good thing, a necessity even. Their existence is the guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master.

Through their various and often opposed powers, nations participate in the common work of civilization; each sounds a note in the great concert of humanity, which, after all, is the highest ideal reality that we are capable of attaining. Isolated, each has its weak point. I often tell myself that an individual who had those faults which in nations are taken for good qualities, who fed off vainglory, who was to that degree jealous, egotistical, and quarrelsome, and who would draw his sword on the smallest pretext, would be the most intolerable of men. Yet all these discordant details disappear in the overall context. Poor humanity, how you have suffered! How many trials still await you! May the spirit of wisdom guide you, in order to preserve you from the countless dangers with which your path is strewn!

Let me sum up, Gentlemen. Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation. So long as this moral consciousness gives proof of its strength by the sacrifices which demand the abdication of the individual to the advantage of the community, it is legitimate and has the right to exist. If doubts arise regarding its frontiers, consult the populations in the areas under dispute. They undoubtedly have the right to a say in the matter. This recommendation will bring a smile to the lips of the transcendents of politics, these infallible beings who spend their lives deceiving themselves and who, from the height of their superior principles, take pity upon our mundane concerns. 'Consult the populations, for heaven's sake! How naive! A fine example of those wretched French ideas which claim to replace diplomacy and war by childishly simple methods.' Wait a while, Gentlemen: let the reign of the transcendents pass; bear the scorn of the powerful with patience. It may be that, after many fruitless gropings, people will revert to our more modest empirical

solutions. The best way of being right in the future is, in certain periods, to know how to resign oneself to being out of fashion.

## Notes

(Notes followed by an asterisk are the translator's.)

1\* A lecture delivered at the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882. 'Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?', *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris, 1947–61), vol. 1, pp. 887–907. An earlier translation, which I have consulted, is in A. Zimmern (ed.), *Modern Political Doctrines* (London, 1939), pp. 186–205.

2\* I have left *patrie* in the original French because it seems to me that to translate it into another European (or, indeed, non-European) language would be to eliminate the kinds of association the term had, in a very large number of countries, throughout the epoch of liberal-democratic nationalism. *Patrie* draws with it a whole cluster of complex and interlocking references to the values of the *patria* of classical republicanism. For an observer like Marx, these values were destroyed forever in the black face of 1848. In another sense, as Marx's arguments in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* allow, they continued to influence the leaders of liberal, nationalist revolutions throughout the nineteenth century — although, obviously, if one were to phrase it in Italian terms, the Cavourian moderate rather than the Mazzinian or Garibaldian radical wing. It may be worth noting that, in the domain of scholarship, Fustel de Coulanges' *The Ancient City* (1864), a study which profoundly influenced Emile Durkheim and which Renan himself had very probably read, shared the vision of classical republicanism which men such as Robespierre and Saint-Just had entertained.

3\* The doctrine of natural frontiers was given its definitive formulation in the course of the French Revolution, and was subsequently applied to other European countries, such as Germany or Italy; it was this doctrine that fuelled the irredentist movements of the second half of the nineteenth century. Justification of territorial claims often rested upon the interpretation of classical texts, such as Tacitus's *Germania* or Dante's *Commedia*.

4\* The partition of Verdun (AD 843) ended a period of civil war within the Frankish Empire, during which the grandsons of Charlemagne had fought each other. Two of the newly created kingdoms, that of Charles the Bald (843–77) and that of Louis the German (843–76), bear some resemblance, in territorial terms, to modern France and modern Germany. Furthermore, much has been made of the linguistic qualities of the Oaths of Strasbourg, sworn by Louis and Charles to each other's armies, in Old French and Old High German respectively. This has often been regarded as the first text in a Romance language (as distinct from Latin) and, by extension, as the first symbolic appearance of the French (and German) nations.

5\* Gregory of Tours (c. 539–94) was a Gallo-Roman and Bishop of Tours from 573 to 594. His *History of the Franks* is an account of life in Merovingian Gaul. Upon the occasion of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew, in 1572, many thousands of Huguenots were killed. This was an event with momentous repercussions for the history of France in general, and for the development of political theory in particular.

7 The House of Savoy owes its royal title to its acquisition of Sardinia (1720)

8\* The Pelasgians were believed, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to have been the original inhabitants of Italy.

9 I enlarged upon this point in a lecture, which is analysed in the Bulletin of the *Association scientifique de France*, 10 March 1878, 'Des services rendus aux Sciences historiques par la Philologie'.

10 Germanic elements are not more considerable in the United Kingdom than when they were in France, when she had possession of Alsace and Metz. If the Germanic language has dominated in the British isles, it was simply because Latin had not wholly replaced the Celtic languages, as it had done in Gaul.

11 Aglauros, who gave her life to save her *patrie*, represents the Acropolis itself. 12\* *Zollverein* is the German word for customs union. Both participants in bourgeois, national revolutions and later commentators emphasize the relation between the nationalist cause and free trade within a single territory. However, E.J. Hobsbawm's comments, on pp. 166–8 of *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1962), shed some light upon Renan's aphorism, in that the vanguard of European nationalism in the 1830s and 1840s was not so much the business class as 'the lower and middle professional, administrative and intellectual strata, in other words, the educated classes'. At another level, Renan's observation reflects his shock at the defeat of France by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian war, which is expressed in both major and occasional writings.

13\* Such epitaphs were part of the habitual repertoire of early-nineteenth-century nationalism, as Leopardi's 'patriotic' *canzoni* make plain.

### 3 *Tribes within nations: the ancient Germans and the history of modern France*

Martin Thom

The central argument of 'What is a nation?', a lecture delivered by Ernest Renan at the Sorbonne in 1882, is perfectly clear. 'His main purpose', Ernest Gellner has observed,

is to deny any naturalistic determinism of the boundaries of nations: these are *not* dictated by language, geography, race, religion, or anything else. He clearly dislikes the spectacle of nineteenth-century ethnographers as advance guards of national claims and expansion. Nations are made by human will....<sup>1</sup>

A deeper understanding of Renan's position in 1882 would require an analysis of the polemical debate between French, German, English, and Italian scholars and politicians, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, regarding the disputed title to Alsace and Lorraine, territories which Louis XIV had seized and which the Treaty of Frankfurt had returned to Germany in 1871.<sup>2</sup> I lack the space to develop this analysis here and wish merely to observe that Renan, as inspection of his earlier writings would show, was less committed to the 'voluntaristic' argument than his lecture suggests.<sup>3</sup>

My concern in the present essay is with his subsidiary argument, namely, that 'it was ... the Germanic invasions which introduced into the world the principle which, later, was to serve as a basis for the existence of nationalities' (Renan, 1882).

Countless studies of French history, from the sixteenth century onwards, rested their interpretation upon either a 'Germanist' or a 'Romanist' attitude to the early Middle Ages. Renan himself was deeply committed to a Germanist approach, as the title of a study by Georges Sorel, '[The] Germanism and historicism of Ernest Renan', makes clear.<sup>4</sup>

Those who are familiar with English history will know of the rhetoric regarding the Norman yoke, and will recall how often, across the centuries, the Anglo-Saxons have been depicted as the true English nation. It may help the reader to grasp how an early tribal people, such as the Franks, could have such symbolic importance in French politics, if it is borne in mind that they too, like the Angles and Saxons, invaded

# 4 The national longing for form

Timothy Brennan

Yo quiero mar y montaña  
hablando mi propia lengua  
Y a nadie pedir permiso  
pa' construir la patria nueva

(Cueca de la Confederación Unida de los Trabajadores (Chile))

For the beauty revealed to him was the soul beauty of a race which his larger audience despised, and he could not articulate the value of another people.

(W. E. B. du Bois)

We live in a world obsessed with national pride, and rampant with boundary wars, with nationalism on the banner of countless parties, no matter how conflicting their place or destination. At the same time, we study literature in a discipline with roots in a philological tradition first formulated with the idea of nations in mind, in the very period when modern nation-states were first being formed. The interplay of these factors is everywhere behind contemporary criticism, but rarely expressed openly.

In Europe and the United States, for the most part, the triumphant literary depiction of nationalism is Romantic. It is part of an earlier period when the forming of nations was a European concern, and before the experience of colonialism, world war, and fascism had soured people on what Edward Said has called nationalism's 'heroic narratives'. But the nationalist mood is, aesthetically as socially, more strongly felt in the emergent societies of the world today, including those ethnic or regional breakaways on the European continent itself (Basque, Irish, Albanian, and so forth).

My subject is 'myths of the nation'. The terms of this phrase are confusing because of their multiple meanings, which multiply still further when considered together: myth as distortion or lie; myth as mythology, legend, or oral tradition; myth as literature *per se*; myth as shibboleth — all of these meanings are present at different times in the writing of modern political culture. If one inclusive sense can be given, it is Malinowski's, where

myth acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.<sup>1</sup>

As for the 'nation', it is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous — the 'natio' — a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging. The distinction is often obscured by nationalists who seek to place their own country in an 'immemorial past' where it's arbitrariness cannot be questioned. The British cultural historian, Raymond Williams, has commented on the need to distinguish between these senses:

'Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial.<sup>2</sup>

This impingence with the apparently divisive and warlike character of 'nation-statism' is very common among European critics in the postwar period, who work either within a Marxist tradition of 'internationalism' or a liberal tradition of sensible 'patriotism', perhaps most of all in England and the United States where even Left social critics (until very recently) have ritually denounced 'imperialism' while withdrawing their support from the oppositional forces that imperial legacy has inevitably unleashed.

For we often hear that nationalism is dead. Despite explosive independence struggles in the Philippines, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, and dozens of other places, many seem convinced of this. Some point to global developments that cast nationalism in the refractory light of heroic memory, where the invariable goals of creating an administrative economy, a repressive apparatus capable of waging war, and a sense of belonging that glosses over class conflicts, are being passed over in favor of local affiliations and loyalties on the one hand, and on the other, are being rendered obsolete by the international realities of multinational corporations and the telecommunications industry.

With a puzzling insensitivity to the emotional response to empire, Tom Nairn in *The Break-up of Britain* was an early and eloquent proponent of these views. He stresses what he calls nationalism's 'Janus-face' — the fact that it is both communal and authoritarian, friendly and bellicose, all at the same time. He insists that the most vital thing about it is its chameleon content: its ability to rouse unlike peoples in dramatically unlike conditions in an impassioned chorus of voluntary co-operation and sacrifice, in which nationalism's unviability is less an impersonal fact of neocolonialism-plus-technics than a political wish, since it is a reactionary throwback that impedes the solidarities of 'internationalism'.

On the other hand, operating as an analyst of what he calls 'cultural apparatuses', the Belgian communications scholar Armand Mattelart revises this view somewhat by supporting the one-world thesis without ignoring the value of the independence movements (he has, for example, actively endorsed the national-political strategies of Allende's Chile and post-1979 Nicaragua). He recognizes that the utopian projections of Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto*, which looked forward to the withering away of 'national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness' and the transformation of 'national and local literatures' into a single 'world literature' has grown, dialectically, into its opposite.

The idea that it is necessary to smash the nation-state, the last obstacle to the new phase of the world-wide expansion of transnational capital, and transform it into a simple management state in an 'interdependent' world, is becoming naturalized . . . . [T]he transnationalization process creates an appeal for increasingly similar, ecumenical and universal values, or, to use the terms of Brzezinski, 'a new planetary consciousness', a new 'harmony', a 'new world unity' and a new 'consensus'.<sup>3</sup>

The value of these words is that Mattelart clearly states here an important ideological tendency that is often only implicit — namely, that on one level the 'nationalism is passé' school of thought is as unable to account for the positive necessity of defensive nationalism as imperial ideologues like former United States National Security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a member of the notoriously interventionist Trilateral Commission.

In another and more sensitive version, it was Paul Ricoeur who already in 1965 spoke of the tension — characteristic of the postwar period — between 'universal civilization' and 'national culture', between the involuntary mutual awareness and dependency of every people and region made possible (and inevitable) by 'civilization', as well as the dogged persistence of defensive movements helping subject peoples carve out a bit of space on the earth's economic turf:

Everywhere throughout the world one finds the same bad movies, the same slot machines, the same plastic or aluminum atrocities, the same twisting of language by propaganda, etc. . . . [O]n the one hand, [the developing world] has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural reversion before the colonialists' personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical, and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandonment of a whole cultural past.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, it is especially in Third World fiction after the Second World War that the fictional uses of 'nation' and 'nationalism' are most pronounced. The 'nation' is precisely what Foucault has called a 'discursive formation' — not simply an allegory or imaginative vision, but a gestative political

structure which the Third World artist is consciously building or suffering the lack of. 'Uses' here should be understood both in a personal, craftsmanlike sense, where nationalism is a trope for such things as 'belonging', 'bordering', and 'commitment'. But it should also be understood as the *institutional* uses of fiction in nationalist movements themselves. At the present time, it is often impossible to separate these senses.

The phrase 'myths of the nation' is ambiguous in a calculated way. It does not refer only to the more or less unsurprising idea that nations are mythical, that — as Hugh Seton-Watson wrote in his massive study of nations and states as recently as 1976 — there is no 'scientific' means of establishing what all nations have in common.<sup>5</sup> The phrase is also not limited to the consequences of this artificiality in contemporary political life — namely, the way that various governments invent traditions to give permanence and solidity to a transient political form.

While the study of nationalism has been a minor industry in the disciplines of sociology and history since the Second World War, the premise here is that *cultural* study, and specifically the study of imaginative literature, is in many ways a profitable one for understanding the nation-centredness of the post-colonial world, as has begun to be seen in some recent studies.<sup>6</sup> From the point of view of cultural studies, this approach in some ways traverses uncharted ground. With the exception of some recent sociological works which use literary theories, it is rare in English to see 'nation-ness' talked about as an imaginative vision — as a topic worthy of full fictional realization.<sup>7</sup> Also, it should be said that this neglect is not true of other literatures with a close and obvious relationship to the subject — for example those of Latin America and (because of the experience of the war) Germany and Italy. Even in the underrepresented branch of Third World English studies, one is likely to find discussions of race and colonialism, but not the 'nation' as such.

Only a handful of critics (often themselves tied to the colonized by background or birth) have seen English fiction about the colonies as growing out of a comprehensive imperial system.<sup>8</sup> The universality of this system, and its effects on the imaginative life, are much clearer — even inescapable — in the literature not of the 'colonies' but of the 'colonized'. The recent interest in Third World literature reflected in special issues of mainstream journals and new publishers' series, as well as new university programs, is itself a mark of the recognition that imperialism is, culturally speaking, a two-way flow.

For, in the period following the Second World War, English society was transformed by its earlier imperial encounters. The wave of postwar immigration to the imperial 'centers' — including in England the influx of large numbers of non-white people from Africa and the Caribbean, and in America, from Asia and Latin America — amounted to what Gordon Lewis calls 'a colonialism in reverse' — a new sense of what it means to be 'English'. To a lesser extent, the same has happened in France.

The wave of successful anti-colonial struggles from China to

Zimbabwe has contributed to the forced attention now being given in the English-speaking world to the point of view of the colonized — and yet, it is a point of view that must increasingly be seen as a part of English-speaking culture. It is a situation, as the Indo-English author Salman Rushdie points out, in which English, 'no longer an English language, now grows from many roots; and those whom it once colonized are carving out large territories within the language for themselves'.<sup>10</sup> The multicultural forces in domestic English life have given weight to the claims of the novelists and essayists abroad who speak more articulately and in larger crowds about neocolonialism. And, in turn, such voices from afar give attention to the volatile cultural pluralism at home. The Chilean expatriate, Ariel Dorfman, has written that 'there may be no better way for a country to know itself than to examine the myths and popular symbols that it exports to its economic and military dominions'.<sup>11</sup> And this would be even truer when the myths come home. One of the most durable myths has certainly been the 'nation'.

Not the colonies, but the colonized. The 'novel of empire' in its classic modernist versions (*Heart of Darkness*, *Passage to India*, *The Plumed Serpent*) has been blind to the impact of a world system largely directed by Anglo-American interests, however much it involved itself passionately, unevenly, and contradictorily in some of the human realities of world domination. For English criticism — even among politically minded critics after the war — has refused to place the fact of domination in a comprehensive approach to its literary material, and that becomes impossible when facing the work of those who have not merely visited but lived it.

The rising number of studies on nationalism in the past three decades reflects its lingering, almost atmospheric, insistence in our thinking.<sup>12</sup> In cultural studies, the 'nation' has often lurked behind terms like 'tradition', 'folklore', or 'community', obscuring their origins in what Benedict Anderson has called 'the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time'.<sup>13</sup>

The rise of the modern nation-state in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature. On the one hand, the political tasks of modern nationalism directed the course of literature, leading through the Romantic concepts of 'folk character' and 'national language' to the (largely illusory) divisions of literature into distinct 'national literatures'.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, and just as fundamentally, literature participated in the formation of nations through the creation of 'national print media' — the newspaper and the novel.<sup>15</sup> Flourishing alongside what Francesco de Sanctis has called 'the cult of nationality in the European nineteenth century', it was especially the novel as a composite but clearly bordered work of art that was crucial in defining the nation as an 'imagined community'.<sup>16</sup>

In tracing these ties between literature and nation, some have evoked the fictive quality of the political concept itself. For example, José Carlos

Mariátegui, a publicist and organizer of Peru's Quechua-speaking minority in the 1920s, outlined the claims of fiction on national thought, saying simply that 'The nation ... is an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically defined'.<sup>17</sup> Race, geography, tradition, language, size, or some combination of these seem finally insufficient for determining national essence, and yet people die for nations, fight wars for them, and write fictions on their behalf. Others have emphasized the *creative* side of nation-forming, suggesting the cultural importance of what has often been treated as a dry, rancorous political fact: 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist'.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that nations are invented has become more widely recognized in the rush of research following the war.<sup>19</sup> To take only one recent example, the idea circuitously finds its way into Eric Hobsbawm's and Terence Ranger's recent work on 'the invention of tradition', which is really a synonym in their writing for the animus of any successful nation-state:

It is clear that plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups — not least in nationalism — were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity either by semi-fiction (Boadicea, Vercingetorix, Arminius the Cheruscan) or by forgery (Ossian, the Czech medieval manuscripts). It is also clear that entirely new symbols and devices came into existence ... such as the national anthem, ... the national flag, ... or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image.<sup>20</sup>

Corresponding to Hobsbawm's and Ranger's examples, literary myth too has been complicit in the creation of nations — above all, through the genre that accompanied the rise of the European vernaculars, their institution as languages of state after 1820, and the separation of literature into various 'national' literatures by the German Romantics at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. And the rise of European nationalism coincides especially with one form of literature — the novel.

## Nation and novel

It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility. But it did much more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that was the nation. In the words of Benedict Anderson, the

novel depicts:

[T]he movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside. The picturesque *tour d'horizon* — hospitals, prisons, remote villages, monasteries, Indians, Negroes — is nonetheless not a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded.<sup>21</sup>

It was in the novel that previously foreign languages met each other on the same terrain, forming an unsettled mixture of ideas and styles, themselves representing previously distinct peoples now forced to create the rationale for a common life. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the novel — usually discussed in terms of a purely textual understanding of his key terms 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism' — describes this aspect of the novel more clearly than anyone.<sup>22</sup> But Bakhtin meant 'heteroglossia' to have basis in actual social life. The period of the novel's rise is that in which:

the world becomes polyglot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end . . . The naive and stubborn co-existence of 'languages' within a given national language also comes to an end — that is, there is no more peaceful co-existence between territorial dialects, social and professional dialects and jargons, literary languages, generic languages within literary languages, epochs in language, and so on.<sup>23</sup>

If the novel for Bakhtin tended to parody other genres, the epic was that genre the novel parodied in its nation-forming role. Hobbsawm's description of the rhetoric of nationhood can be found also in Bakhtin's description of epic, where 'beginning', 'first', 'founder', 'ancestor', 'that which occurred earlier', and so on, are . . . valorized temporal categories' corresponding to the 'reverent point of view of a descendant'.<sup>24</sup> But, whereas it was a feature of epic never to be addressed to or for one's contemporaries, the novel (on the contrary) directed itself to an 'open-ended present'. In its hands, 'tradition' became what Hobbsawm calls a 'useable past',<sup>25</sup> and the evocation of deep, sacred origins — instead of furthering unquestioning, ritualistic reaffirmations of a people (as in epic) — becomes a contemporary, practical means of *creating* a people.

If the epic's 'ritual' view gives way to the novel's political one, the change is mirrored in the linguistic basis for the novel itself. The separation of literature into 'national literatures' at the outset of the novel's rise to prominence reflected the earlier victory of the European vernaculars over the sacred imperial 'truth-language' of Latin — only one instance that seems to justify Benedict Anderson's claim that the 'dawn of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century coincided with the dusk of religious modes of thought',<sup>26</sup> or, as he puts it in another place, that nationalism largely extended and modernized (although did not replace) 'religious irragings', taking on religion's concern with death, continuity, and the desire for origins.

The religious answers to questions of continuity and origins were not

specific enough to deal with the fragmentation of papal empire and monarchical realm. If languages imply nations, how many nations would eventually sprout from the hopeless polyglot entities following the decline of the medieval empires within Europe? If new collectivities are formed on a basis other than papal or dynastic authority, on what basis? How is a continual chaotic splintering to be prevented? The novel implicitly answers these questions in its very form by objectifying the nation's *composite* nature: a hotch potch of the ostensibly separate 'levels of style' corresponding to class; a jumble of poetry, drama, newspaper report, memoir, and speech; a mixture of the jargons of race and ethnicity.

One of the advantages of a broadly cultural approach to the dilemma of nationalist politics has been its illumination of nationalism's reliance on religious modes of thought. Régis Debray, for example, has assaulted the view that the nation, because historically specific in its late-eighteenth-century form, was also transient. He chose to take up the other half of Williams's dichotomy:

[L]ike language, the nation is an invariable which cuts across modes of production . . . We should not become obsessed by the determinate historical form of the nation-state but try to see what that form is made out of. It is created from a natural organization proper to *homo sapiens*, one *through which life itself is rendered untouchable or sacred*. This *sacred character constitutes the real national question*.<sup>27</sup>

Debray's focus is relevant here as an explanation in *literary* terms of the nation's universal appeal, and so locates the symbolic background of national fiction. The nation is not only a recent and transitory political form, but also responds to the 'twin threats of disorder and death' confronting all societies. Against these, the nation sets two 'anti-death processes':

These are, first of all, a delimitation in time, or the assignation of origins, in the sense of an *Ark*. This means that society does not derive from an infinite regression of cause and effect. A point of origin is fixed, the mythic birth of the *Polis*, the birth of Civilization or of the Christian era, the Muslim Hegira, and so on. This zero point or starting point is what allows ritual repetition, the ritualization of memory, celebration, commemoration — in short, all those forms of magical behaviour signifying defeat of the irreversibility of time.

The second founding gesture of any human society is its delimitation within an enclosed space. Here also there takes place an encounter with the sacred, in the sense of the *Temple*. What is the Temple, etymologically? It was what the ancient priest or diviner traced out, raising his wand heavenwards, the outline of a sacred space within which divination could be undertaken. This fundamental gesture is found at the birth of all societies, in their mythology at least. But the myth presence is an indication of something real.<sup>28</sup>

Debray, of course, witnessed the vitality of nationalism as a younger



man in revolutionary Cuba, an experience (like that of Algeria and Vietnam for the generations of the 1950s and the 1960s) that sharply modified Marxist and liberal theories of nationalism, and gave way to what has been called 'Third Worldism': an endorsement of anti-imperialist liberation movements that amounted to a panacea.<sup>29</sup>

This background of spirituality and permanence is never lost, even in the historically specific cultural expressions of the national form. The Marxist mystic, Walter Benjamin, has pointed out that the novel is dependent upon the book, and was historically unique among literary genres by being developed in its modern form after the invention of printing. 'Print-capitalism', according to Anderson, meant ideological insurrection on a large scale, and created the conditions where people could begin to think of themselves as a nation. The novel's created world allowed for multitudinous actions occurring simultaneously within a single, definable community, filled with 'calendrical coincidences' and what Anderson calls (after Benjamin) 'traverse, cross-time'. Read in isolation, the novel was nevertheless a mass ceremony; one could read alone with the conviction that millions of others were doing the same, at the same time.

The composite quality of the novel cannot be understood only ethnically or regionally. The novel's rise accompanied a changing concept of 'realism' itself, which acquired its present association with the lower classes only after the Enlightenment when, as Auerbach describes, realism came to involve 'the serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of subject matter for problematic-existential representation'.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the novel brought together the 'high' and the 'low' within a national framework — not fortuitously, but for specific national reasons. The first appearance of incipient nationalist consciousness, according to Kohn, took place in the Cromwellian forces of the English Civil War. The ideas here were so tightly bound up with the aspirations of the middle classes for 'free expression', 'self-assertion', and freedom from the authority of a wilful and tyrannical monarchy, that 'individual liberty' became inseparable from the nationalist ethos. The incipient liberal nationalism of Milton and, later, Locke found its way through the French philosophes to North America, where it raised its head in the form of attacks on authoritarianism, censorship, and the strangling of free trade.

On this North American terrain, the 'nationalist' idea of oppression from *afar* appeared, although it was not exactly the 'foreign' oppression that would become so common in the period after the Second World War. In this case, the same religion, language, and history were common to England and its North American colony. But the very tenuousness of the stated need for independence pushed the grounds for separation from specific middle-class 'liberties' to the much broader *indalienable rights* — the universality of which applied in principle also to the lower classes. All this gave expression to Rousseau's concept of the collective personality of the 'people', the unity and common destiny of a 'community' whose cohesiveness relied upon forces emanating from the ground up, and

which, being natural, encompassed all. In Germany, Herder transformed Rousseau's 'people' into the *Volk*. The significance of this latter concept is its shift from Rousseau's Enlightenment emphasis on civic virtue to a woollier Romantic insistence on the primordial and ineluctable roots of nationhood as a *distinguishing feature* from other communities. Each people was now set off by the 'natural' characteristics of language, and the intangible quality of a specific *Volksgeist*.

It was, in fact, the urge to give solidity to this particular and differentiating 'spirit of the people' that led in Germany to the first serious collections of folktales and folksongs, which according to Bakhtin are the prototypes of the novel form. The novel's roots must ultimately be sought in folklore.<sup>31</sup> These collections provided an impetus to the study of modern philology, which separated the study of literature into various 'national' literatures on the basis of linguistic distinctions considered to be inviolable and absolute. Contemporary literary study is still based on these distinctions first made in the period of incipient European nation-forming. In short, nationalism is enmeshed in the particular history of Europe and its ideology of 'democracy'; it necessarily invokes the 'people', although this people becomes, increasingly after the late nineteenth century, inseparable from the modern working class, both in the Marxist sense, and in that hybrid of Marxism and Third World populism made famous by figures like Ho Chi Minh, Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Frantz Fanon, and many others.

The 'folk', the 'pelebeians', the 'people', the 'working class' were now important components for any inclusive treatment of the nation in fiction, as Bruce King has pointed out:

Nationalism is an urban movement which identifies with the rural areas as a source of authenticity, finding in the 'folk' the attitudes, beliefs, customs and language to create a sense of national unity among people who have other loyalties. Nationalism aims at ... rejection of cosmopolitan upper classes, intellectuals and others likely to be influenced by foreign ideas.<sup>32</sup>

Without this sense of rejection of the 'cosmopolitan upper classes', plebeian authenticity has been a feature of English literature throughout the rise of modern nationalism in Europe. In the English nineteenth century, for example, authors adopted the concepts of German Romanticism, expressing them most often in debates over the 'literary language' and its debt to a 'common language' — the poor people's idiom, sometimes referred to as 'native speech'. In Wordsworth's 'Preface to the Lyrical Ballads', or Hazlitt's 'On familiar style', the issue of common speech had even gone beyond a defense of the writer's departure from the proprieties of style, and was associated with peasant virtue — an abstraction and an idealization of the democratic ideology necessary for the rise of market capitalism. This association is even more pronounced and even less concerned with style *per se* in Morris's 'Art of the people'. In *Marius the Epicurean*, Pater attempted to define a 'proletariate of speech' in the stylistic concept of 'Euphuism' — a fertile mixture of high

and low idioms. There are, of course, many other examples.

The populist undercurrents of national thought have been put forth clearly by the novel's better known theorists, although not in the form of a 'national' concept *per se*. Both Lukács and (as we have said) Bakhtin, despite their differences in many other respects, explain the novel in terms of epic. In both, the two are inverted images of the other — the former supplanting the latter in a period of transition from one ruling class to another. In the early Lukács, this rupture is traced to the disintegration of organic community in antiquity, the breakdown of its naively authoritarian and religious hierarchies. When the bourgeois individual became the dominant myth, the external became the internal, the worldly became the textual.

In Bakhtin, as we will see, the issues are discussed less as content analysis than as an attempt to explain the evolution (and breakdown) of generic distinctions as such, where literary forms are shown to carry the weight of new perceptions made possible by changes in society. The epic is for him 'preserved and revealed only in the form of national tradition', which he describes as 'a commonly held evaluation and point of view'.<sup>33</sup> For Bakhtin, the upheaval is less between elements within a given society than between societies, and although (unlike Lukács) he takes his examples of the novel from Hellenistic Romance, Latin mock-epic, and medieval satire, like Lukács he concentrates on those periods when large, incorporating dynamic realms are in the process of decline. For the modern novel, this means precisely the period of market capitalism and the age of exploration which was also the period of the transformation of the vernaculars into languages of state, the creation of national economies, and the subsequent recognition of nationalism as the dominant political ideology of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, for the late Lukács, the key event in the development of the modern, or (as he calls it) 'historical' novel, is the French Revolution; for Bakhtin, that period when 'the world becomes polyglot once and for all and irreversibly'.

It is striking to realize that these still pivotal theorists of the novel exhaust their analyses at their starting points — the era of the still revolutionary middle classes. Not only are the national-political implications of their work on fiction left merely implicit, but the contemporary consequences of their findings have remained completely submerged. According to Bakhtin:

The embryos of novelties prose appear in the heteroglot and heterological world of the Hellenistic era, in imperial Rome, in the process of disintegration and decadence of the verbal and ideological centralism of the medieval Church. Similarly, in modern times the flourishing of the novel is always connected with the decomposition of stable verbal and ideological systems, and, on the other hand, to the reinforcement of linguistic heterology and to its impregnation by intentions, within the literary dialect as well as outside of it.<sup>34</sup>

Is it not natural to assume that the novel itself would assume new forms

following the institution of another closed system with its accompanying universal language, whose disintegration (the system and the language) we are now witnessing? For of course the triumph of European nationalism co-existed with the consolidation of empire, and the world became Europe's 'little circle' — just as beleaguered and constricted as the ethnic and linguistic sub-communities had been under the rule of the imperial church, and the monarchies of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. What then of the period following the Second World War?

Another pivotal critic, who is not normally thought of as an analyst of the novel, realizes much more than Lukács and Bakhtin the parameters of the contemporary novel. In 'The storyteller', Walter Benjamin provides the most useful leads for understanding the form of the novel, in the postmodern period, because he evokes the conflict between originally oral literature and that (like the novel) which has from the beginning been dependent on the book. This conflict of the oral and the written, of course, suggest the conflicts now occurring between developed and emergent societies, a conflict that begins more and more to characterize the postwar political scene, as we will see below. But in Benjamin it leads to a more fundamental conflict between communal and individual experience — something which we saw above was contained contradictorily in nationalist ideology from the start:

What differentiates the novel from all other forms of prose literature — the fairy tale, the legend, even the novella — is that it neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it. This distinguishes it from storytelling in particular. The storyteller takes what he tells from experience — his own or that reported by others ... the novelist has isolated himself.<sup>35</sup>

Benjamin's thesis is that, in our time, 'experience has fallen in value' as a result of the cultural development of printing, especially in the form of the newspaper; and so (although he comes at it from a different angle), he joins Anderson in coupling novel and newspaper as the decisive print media of bourgeois society.

[W]ith the full control of the middle class, which has the press as one of its most important instruments in fully developed capitalism, there emerges a form of communication which, no matter how far back its origins may lie, never before influenced the epic form in a decisive way. But now it does exert such an influence. And it turns out that it confronts storytelling as no less of a stranger than did the novel, but in a more menacing way, and that it also brings about a crisis in the novel. This new form of communication is *information*.<sup>36</sup>

Although Benjamin has been more prescient in isolating the relevant components of social communication, he is intriguing above all as a failed questioner. To counterpose information to epic (or folkloric) 'experience' is, as I hope to show below, a deep misunderstanding of what the novel has become in at least one trend of Third World fiction. Nevertheless, writing as a European between the wars, Benjamin instinctively predicted

where the developments would occur. Benjamin belongs to that strain of nostalgic modernism, which revolts against the 'ready-made' quality of modern life made possible by the uprooting of communal, village life. In this sense he is very similar to the early Lukács. For Benjamin, information is contrasted to 'intelligence' or 'epic wisdom'.

The intelligence that came from afar — whether the spatial kind from foreign countries or the temporal kind of tradition — possessed an authority which gave it validity, even when it was not subject to verification. Information, however, lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appear 'understandable in itself'.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, as Benjamin uses it, information is inseparable from propaganda — it is that news which we receive from all parts of the globe that is already 'shot through with explanations'. There are three major areas where Benjamin's account seems contradicted by many novels of the contemporary Third World. As a negation of epic, he supposed the novel to stand against 'memory' — the 'epic faculty par excellence', whereas 'memory' — for example in the quasi-journalistic banana massacre episode of García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* — is what many of these novels insist on preserving.<sup>38</sup> The novel was supposed to tend to substitute the story's moral with an abstract, philosophical investigation into the meaning of life, whereas novels as various as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* or Vic Reid's *The Leopard* deliberately moralize recent local history sketching out known political positions. And, finally, because information must always sound plausible, the novel was thought to oppose the inclination of the storyteller to borrow from the miraculous, which the wholesale success of so-called 'magical realism' (not only in Latin America) has shown to be wrong. The fact is that 'news', precisely because it has become the nemesis of national fiction by originating in the imperial centres (which largely control the images projected to and about the Third World), is thematically and formally incorporated into the postwar novel. A large body of postwar fiction is in this sense 'neocolonial', composed of various novels of 'information', voices from the Third World seeking to project themselves into a European setting.

And yet it is precisely here that the greatest paradox of the new novel can be seen. For under conditions of illiteracy and shortages, and given simply the leisure-time necessary for reading one, the novel has been an elitist and minority form in developing countries when compared to poem, song, television, and film. Almost inevitably it has been the form through which a thin, foreign-educated stratum (however sensitive or committed to domestic political interests) has communicated to metropolitan reading publics, often in translation. It has been, in short, a naturally cosmopolitan form that empire has allowed to play a national role, as it were, only in an international arena.

### Phases of the nation

Writers as various as Hans Kohn, Hugh Seton-Watson, Tom Nairn, and Horace Davis have combined to point out the internal inconsistencies, poses, and historical absurdities of nationalist thought.<sup>39</sup> Elie Kedourie has read the phenomenon entirely through the development of German idealistic philosophy, noting ominously, for example, Fichte's retrospectively shocking view that 'conflict between strata promotes indirectly to the self-realization of the whole human race'.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, since the Second World War, in a conveniently European lapse of memory, studies of nationalism have not only increased; they have for the most part condemned the thing they studied. Kohn and Kedourie, for example, both define nationalism by suggesting it has a totalitarian edge: 'Nationalism is a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state'.<sup>41</sup> Both the interest and the negative judgment are the result of events directly bearing on the war — the rise of various 'imperial' nationalisms among those latecomers to empire in the developed west: Italy, Germany, and Japan. Here the witnessing of extreme group loyalties, manipulated by the repressive regimes of European fascism, led to a search for the nationalist roots of a western tradition previously thought to be civilized.<sup>42</sup>

The terms of nationalism have from the European perspective apparently reversed. Not freedom from tyranny, but the embodiment of tyranny. The question is: how much is this new perspective a result of owning, rather than suffering, an empire? That is, can't it be said that the recoiling from nationalism is also partly due to the challenge of the rising national movements of the developing world? Herbert Schiller, for example, has pointed out that since 1948, over ninety new nations have been formed out of the rubble of the European empires destroyed by the war — formed, that is, at our expense.<sup>43</sup>

A good deal of depression surrounding the term cannot, however, be explained by European prejudice alone. For one of its sources is the wholesale exporting of authoritarian military regimes to the fledgling countries of the Third World, although the observation is usually made without sufficiently noting the part played in this by the imperial legacies of differentiating administrative structures, unequal development, and 'foreign aid'. Lamenting the savagery of many states in what should have been the Third World's 'springtime' of nationalist idealism is not an activity limited to European sociologists. It forms a major sub-category of Third World fiction itself; featured in such representative works as García Márquez's *Autumn of the Patriarch*, Miguel Asturias's *El Señor Presidente*, Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, and many others — novels that are really a necessary adjunct to the insurgent and liberationist rhetoric of Fanon and his cultural descendants, although in an inverted form: a pointed exposure of the 'empire's old clothes' worn by a comprador elite who like Chile's Pinochet, Egypt's Mubarak, or Haiti's late Baby Doc Duvalier, take on the nationalist mantle only to cloak their people more fully with the old dependency.

Because the states which must transform the postcolonial territories into 'nations' are (unlike those in the creole nineteenth century), already bequeathed, and sitting upon seething disparities of class and background, the problem for the neocolonial writer has not only been to create the aura of national community eroded by the 'monopolization of the forms of cultural expression' in dominant culture, but to expose the excesses which the *a priori* state, chasing a national identity after the fact, has created at home. If, as Horace Davis argues, 'any reasonable consideration tells us that state and nation build each other then the problem of nation is also the problem of the influence of state policy on national literary production; the conflict between anti-colonial inspiration, on the one hand, and on the other, the commercial and governmental pre-forming of the imagination. And what we really have now is merely a confusion of terms and a false and merely nominal continuity. For it is the first period of nationalism where the state predates or precedes nationalist sentiments, which are then called in after the fact, so to speak.

If European nationalism was a project of *unity* on the basis of conquest and economic expediency, insurgent or popular nationalism (not, that is, of the Pinocchio variety) is for the most part a project of consolidation following an act of *separation* from Europe.<sup>43</sup> It is a task of reclaiming community from within boundaries defined by the very power whose presence denied community. Sometimes supporting, sometimes rejecting the political states in which they find themselves, the writers must have a goal that can only be a collective political identity still capable of being realized — despite multinational corporations and regional alliances like Contadora, OPEC, and the Pan African Congress — in any other form than the nation-state. It is not that people, or the artists who speak for them, can imagine no other affiliations, but that the solutions to dependency are only collective, and the territorial legacies of the last 200 years provide the collectivity no other basis upon which to fight dependency.

The crippling subaltern status implied by having to follow an imaginative form of another and oppressing culture is not fact, however, but myth. The constraints are real, but not their purported origins. As elsewhere, the myth thrives on a selective and ethnocentric history. We imagine that the advanced countries of Europe, under the pressures of Enlightenment ideals and the commercial needs of the rising industrial classes, *invented* the nation-state, and then exported it into Europe's dominions, where it would play a ridiculously unsuitable role, postdating the arbitrary division of the world into administrative and economic zones of influence, already with their own state apparatuses, and therefore having to project independence on the terms set down by the former rulers.

This scenario is accurate except where it assigns origins. The nation-state is not only the by-product of the conditions created by European exploration; it was, more or less from the start, forged in acts of separation from the European centers of Madrid and London. If one discounts the civil wars of England and France, the first nationalists are not Frenchmen, Spaniards, or Englishmen, but the creole middle classes of the New World — people like Simon Bolívar, Toussaint L'Ouverture, and

Ben Franklin. From these clearest practical expressions, the age of European nationalism takes off following the French Revolution, combining the rise of the vernaculars, populist revery, and (on the other hand) the skillful transformation of the European dynasties (Romanov's, Hapsburgs, Hanoverians, and so forth) into national lookalikes in populist dress.<sup>45</sup>

For nationalism is an ideology that, even in its earliest forms in the nineteenth century, implied unequal development.<sup>46</sup> Even though as an ideology it came out of the imperialist countries, these countries were not able to formulate their own national aspirations until the age of exploration. The markets made possible by European imperial penetration motivated the construction of the nation-state at home. European nationalism itself was motivated by what Europe was doing in its farflung dominions.

The 'national idea', in other words, flourished in the soil of foreign conquest. Imperial conquest created the conditions for the fall of Europe's universal Christian community, but resupplied Europe with a religious sense of mission and self-identity that becomes *universal* (both within and outside Europe) after the war — a universalizing that today has led, dialectically to a break-up and a splintering. 'The twentieth century since 1945 has become the first period in history in which the whole of mankind has accepted one and the same political attitude, that of nationalism.'<sup>47</sup>

In a sense, then, nationalist doctrine takes over religion's social role, substituting for the imperial church, the most successful early European nationalist was Napoleon, who decried the regal centralization of power while marching across Europe in the name of France. In its European origins, nationalism was also messianic, modelled on patterns of Judeo-Christianity. According to Kohn, modern nationalism took three concepts from Old Testament mythology: 'the idea of a chosen people, the emphasis on a common stock of memory of the past and of hopes for the future, and finally national messianism'.<sup>48</sup> If the concept of superiority ('chosen people') characterizes the outlook of the European adventurer, it is the Hebraic underdog, the sense of being an outcast people, that characterizes the other:

Not only oppressed nationalities took refuge in the hope of a messianic mission: ... it expressed also the struggle of heretical sects and oppressed classes for the realization of their dreams and aspirations, and as the secular idea of historical progress it still retains today some of its religious force.<sup>49</sup>

The point here is how the earlier impulse towards *indivision* gave way through conquest to a universally shared outlook; the national becomes international in the postwar, to the point that it becomes possible to speak of such things as 'Islamic nationalism' or 'Latin American nationalism' in reference to entire continents or regions. There are two imperial legacies that have contributed to this internationalist feeling of solidarity against empire — the presence of vestigial 'world' languages (primarily Spanish, English, and Arabic) and international communications. Thus, a recurrent

motif of contemporary fiction is the bridge that exists between imaginative literature and other forms of cultural information and communication: the place of literature within what C. Wright Mills called 'the cultural apparatus'. As with so much else, the imperial relationship has made this apparatus more visible.

A well-known UNESCO document of 1980 on world information imbalances (whose authors include García Márquez and the British cultural historian Richard Hoggart) suggests the special problem:

It has become increasingly clear that the effects of intellectual and cultural dependence are as serious as those of political subjection or economic dependence. There can be no genuine, effective independence without the communication resources needed to safeguard it. The argument has been made that a nation whose mass media are under foreign domination cannot claim to be a nation.<sup>50</sup>

It is obvious how different this kind of cry is from 'no taxation without representation'. How does the Third World writer participate in national culture under the conditions of what Herbert Schiller calls 'the monopolization of culture' by ceaseless western commercial and informational outpourings?<sup>51</sup> What chance does the *naïve* have against this constant reminder of dependency? How does one establish community on the grounds of an erstwhile imperial administrative sector, when the present rulers often perform like handpicked successors of the colonial regime? While, from an administrative and economic point of view, distinct nations are multiplying, the mutual awareness and interlocking influences of global culture begun by imperialism is still increasing, creating those conditions described by Bakhtin (but now applicable on a worldwide basis) in which 'languages cast light on one another' and 'the period of national languages coexisting but closed and deaf to one another, comes to an end'.

### Exile vs. nationalism

How could the most universally legitimate political ideology of our time fail to become a *topos* in postwar fiction? And how could its existence be ignored, or replaced by the *topos* of 'exile', nationalism's opposite? In our thinking, 'exiles' have usually been those famous American and British artists seeking a change in creative surroundings. They have not referred usually to those displaced by world war and colonization, in the sense suggested by Edward Said when he says,

[it] is necessary to set aside Joyce and Nabokov and even Conrad, who wrote of exile with such pathos, but of exile without cause or rationale. Think instead of the uncountable masses for whom UN agencies have been created, or refugees without urbanity, with only ration cards and agency numbers.<sup>52</sup>

Exile and nationalism are conflicts of feeling that correspond to more traditional aesthetic conflicts: artistic iconoclasm and communal

assent, the unique vision and the collective truth. In fact, many words in the exile family divide themselves between an archaic or literary sense and a modern, political one: for example, banishment vs. deportation; émigré vs. immigrant; wanderer vs. refugee; exodus vs. flight. The division between exile and nationalism, therefore, presents itself as one not only between individual and group, but between loser and winner, between a mood of rejection and a mood of celebration. Literarily, the division is suggested by the tensions between lyric and epic, tragedy and comedy, monologue and dialogue, confession and proclamation, and has led in some recent Third World literature to what Barbara Harlow has called 'a full-scale counter-hegemonic aesthetics', with a striking absence of hostility toward 'modernity' and an attempt to preserve identity (if not traditional values) by acquiring the technologies, the diplomatic strategies, and the 'worldliness' of the former rulers.<sup>53</sup> Many of the novels often attempt to assemble the fragments of a national life and give them a final shape. They become documents designed to prove national consciousness, with multiple, myriad components that display an active communal life.

In this sense, it is important to see how contemporary nationalism has affected the English tradition as a *whole* — that is, not only the English-speaking former colonies, or in the fate of 'World English Literature's' reception into the academy, but in the writing of English cultural criticism itself. The nation-centered origins of literary studies disorients the coverage of that vast realm of experience arising from imperial contacts. Thus, for the most part, the English criticism of empire has been, until recently, almost all of one kind: the slightly ill-at-ease, slightly ashamed, but enormously forgiving recognition of imperial themes in writers from 'the center'. Forster on the possibilities of intercultural communication, Conrad on the savagery of civilized man, Lawrence on the liberating chaos of primitive religion, Greene on the political intrigues of European governments in cultures they do not understand.

In *Fiction and the Colonial Experience*, Jeffrey Meyers illustrates the kind of criticism widely found in English studies of the 'colonial novel'. He recognizes liberally that 'Europe [has] imposed[] its manners, customs, religious beliefs and moral values on an indigenous way of life', and that the reverberations from centuries of foreign domination constitute 'one of the most significant historical developments in our century'.<sup>54</sup> But the spirit is past tense. He explains that 'the colonial novel runs parallel to the rise and fall of western colonialism', as if the colonial cycle had run its course. By doing so, he separates himself sharply from the discourse of critics from the former colonies who, despite their innumerable divisions and outlooks, are unified in identifying a postwar structure of neocolonial dependency.

In this framework of past transgression and present enlightenment, Meyers finds the pattern for his study of canonical 'colonial' literature. He sets the early Kipling short stories against the collective efforts of Conrad, Forster, and the Kipling of *Kim*, allowing him to complain of the stereotyping of the native in the earlier work, and, above all, its outlook in which 'all moral issues are seen from only one point of view'. On the

other hand, the 'good' colonial novel offers what Meyers calls a 'humanistic' approach, which has the attraction of trading in firm moral conviction for 'a universal fascination with the savage and the incomprehensible'. This fascination is supposed to lead us to a point where we can mediate upon the 'human lessons of previous colonial entanglements'.

It is assumed that 'deracinated white men' who venture into hostile regions for the purpose of self-questioning are paying tribute to the native; their vision is purer than the early Kipling sort of white, because they understand that bestial nature is preferable to technological civilization. Modernism has redeemed white men from the modern world by teaching them (through the savage's mute example) that rationality, commitment, and technology are swindles. Meyers' projection attributes to the 'savage' an incomprehensibility that conveniently obscures the inequality of the colonial relationship, while pretending to thank the 'native' for a quality that, under the conditions of a developing world, could only hinder him.

Similarly on the Left, Terry Eagleton's *Exiles and Emigrés* – a well-known work on the exile theme by a writer often sensitive to the under-sides of English rule – is surprisingly reluctant to address the effects of colonialism on the concept of exile itself. He begins by referring to the absence of English writers among the century's best, and by pointing to 'certain central flaws and impoverishments in conventional English literary art'. That culture was unable, of its own impetus, to produce great literary art.<sup>35</sup> Eagleton attributes these impoverishments to England's inwardness. On the contrary, the successful James and Conrad 'bring to bear on the culture a range of experience – of America, Europe, Africa, the East . . . It was out of this tension that James and Conrad created their major work; and it was a tension notably absent in the work of their contemporaries'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite this suggestive way of putting things – finding in the transplanted English gentlemen, James and Conrad, a vital contact with the colonial world – Eagleton's book basically combats English insularity only by binding it more closely to European insularity. His efforts are unnecessarily modest. While Eagleton in other places attempts to revivify English culture with theories from Germany and France, he stops short of including in this work the thinking of colonial subjects, despite their screaming relevance to his theme. Once more the colonies are a passive fund of good writing material: Conrad brings back impressions from Africa and the east, whose noteworthiness lies in their contribution to the production of 'great literary art'.

Again, novels in the postwar period are unique because they operate in a world where the level of communications, the widespread politics of insurgent nationalism, and the existence of large international cultural organizations have made the topics of nationalism and exile unavoidably aware of one another. The idea of nationhood is not only a political plea, but a formal binding together of disparate elements. And out of the multiplicities of culture, race, and political structures, grows also a repeated dialectic of uniformity and specificity: of world culture and national culture, of family and of people. One of many clear formulations

of this can be found in Fanon's statement that 'life is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows'.<sup>37</sup> These universalist tendencies – already implicit in the concept of 'inalienable rights' – is accentuated by the break-up of the English and Spanish imperial systems, with their unities of language, their common enemies, and (in the case of Spanish America) their contiguous terrain. Examples of the persistence of this motif might be found, for instance, in the controversial role of the terms 'Africa' in the writing of the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe, or 'America' in the essays of the Cuban patriot José Martí.

Thus, of course, not all Third World novels about nations are 'nationalistic'. The variations range from outright attacks on independence, often mixed with nostalgia for the previous European *status quo* (as in the work of V. S. Naipaul, Manohar Malgonkar, and others), to vigorously anti-colonial works emphasizing native culture (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tayib Salih, Sipho Sepamla, and others), to cosmopolitan explanations of the 'lower depths', or the 'fantastic unknown' by writers acquainted with the tastes and interests of dominant culture (García Márquez, Wole Soyinka, Salman Rushdie, and others).

As we shall see, in one strain of Third World writing the contradictory topoi of exile and nation are fused in a lament for the necessary and regrettable insistence of nation-forming, in which the writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven him into a kind of exile – a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and an alienation from it. As we have said, the cosmopolitan thrust of the novel form has tended to highlight this branch of well-publicized Third World fiction. One result has been a trend of cosmopolitan commentators on the Third World, who offer an *inside view* of formerly submerged peoples for target reading publics in Europe and North America in novels that comply with metropolitan literary tastes.

Some of its better known authors have been from Latin America: for example, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Alejo Carpentier, Miguel Asturias, and others. But there is also a related group of postwar satirists of nationalism and dependency – writers of encyclopedic national narratives that dismember a recent and particularized history in order to expose the political dogma surrounding and choking it. Here one thinks especially of the Indo-English author Salman Rushdie, of the Paraguayan novelist Augusto Roa Bastos, and the South African Nadine Gordimer, along with many others.

In the case of Salman Rushdie, for instance, the examples of India and Pakistan are, above all, an opportunity to explore postcolonial responsibility. The story he tells is of an entire region slowly coming to think of itself as one, but a corollary of his story is disappointment. So little improvement has been made. In fact, the central irony of his novels is that independence has damaged Indian spirits by proving that 'India' can act as abominably as the British did. In a kind of metafictional extravagance, he treats the heroism of nationalism bitterly and comically because it always seems to him to evolve into the nationalist demagoguery

of a caste of domestic sellouts and powerbrokers.

This message is very familiar to us because it has been easier to embrace in our metropolitan circles than the explicit challenges of, say, the Salvadoran protest-author Manlio Argueta, or the sparse and caustic satires of the Nigerian author, Obi Egbuna. However, it is perhaps the trend's overt cosmopolitanism — its Third World thematics as seen through the elaborate fictional architecture of European high art — that perfectly imagines the novel's obsessive nation-centeredness and its imperial (that is, universalizing) origins. Distanced from the sacrifices and organizational drudgery of actual resistance movements, and yet horrified by the obliqueness of the west towards their own cultures, writers like Rushdie and Vargas Llosa have been well poised to thematize the centrality of nation-forming while at the same time demythifying it from a European perch. Although Vargas Llosa's erudite and stylistically sumptuous *The War of the End of the World*, for example is not at all characteristic of the 'counter-hegemonic aesthetics' of much Third World writing, its very disengagement frees him to treat the ambivalence of the independence process as a totality, and, although negatively, reassert its fundamental importance to the postcolonial imagination. His treatment may be neither the most representative nor the most fair, but its very rootlessness brilliantly articulates the emotional life of decolonization's various political contestants. It is 'in-between'.

Based on the historical classic, *Rebellion in the Backlands* (1902) by Euclides da Cunha, the novel immortalizes that notoriously elusive movement in the history of post-independence when, having declared itself a democratic republic, the country erupts into civil war, and all factions scramble for power. With the same cosmic pessimism as his earlier treatment of failed republicanism in *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969), which dealt with the sadism and corruption of the Odría dictatorship in his native Peru as seen through the conversations of two characters in a seedy Lima bar, *The War of the End of the World* is in a sense a companion piece to that earlier novel. In a much less experimental prose and with a straight chronological structure recalling the Lukácsian high bourgeois 'historical' novel, it dissects the failures not of Peru, but of neighboring Brazil, whose epic dimensions amount in Vargas Llosa's view to a kind of Latin American model of disappointed promise, self-serving domestic machinations, and foreign interventions, which combine to ensure the continuity of military dictatorship.

If *Conversation in the Cathedral* followed the logic of his epigraph and was from Balzac, that 'the novel is the private history of nations', there filled with Vargas Llosa's own personal reminiscences of Peruvian life under Odría in the 1950s, *The War of the End of the World*, precisely because of Brazil's relative cultural distance within a common Latin American reality, allowed for a more reportorial stance, the country separated from him not only by language and geography, but by time, since the story's events take place in 1896–7. In a sense, its setting in Latin America, which (unlike Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean) achieved formal independence in the nineteenth century, captures with extraordinary clarity the ongoing

link between the era of European nation-forming and the quite different process of contemporary decolonization, since the novel, published in 1981, can only be read backwards through those well-known events. An angry opponent of Latin American guerrilla movements, Vargas Llosa here chooses a setting that allows him to mull over the components of a domestic liberal democracy that has eluded his own land, and that is characteristic (in his view) of the nation-forming of a Europe that he emulates artistically, and knows and loves personally from several decades of travel.

The story deals with an actual history: the turn-of-the-century rise of a commune of religious fanatics in the Canudos backlands region of Bahia in north-eastern Brazil. They thrive under the direction of an apocalyptic visionary named Antonio Conselheiro (Anthony the Counsellor), whose devoted followers are drawn from Brazil's *jagunços* — an underclass of reformed criminals, landless peasants, and lumpen outcasts. Speaking in parables and working miracles, the 'Counsellor' wins an immense following dedicated to chasing the Devil from the land, and enraptured by his call to 'animate your collective memory in order to remember the future'. After a while, the rabble becomes a well-drilled, paramilitary cult defending the 'New Jerusalem' of Canudos, which has become, both in their own minds and in that of the government, a counter-base of power, fiercely Catholic (although they practice free love), and unwilling to recognize the new constitution, the national census, or the concept of using money as a unit of exchange. The millenarian promise of communal happiness enrages the local landowners after a series of raiding operations on the neighboring *fazendas* and the seizure of land.

As we watch the rise of Canudos and follow the dreams of its inhabitants the reaction of the outside world gets full play in the novel. In the on-the-spot reporting of a 'myopic journalist' the Brazilian public gradually learns of the cult but only through the distorting veil of the ruling party's newspapers. Eventually, the Bahian Progressive Republican Party tries to disgrace the ruling Conservatives by claiming that the cult is their creation, and by arguing that they have enrolled the aid of the English crown, which is supposedly running guns to the rebels through a certain Gallicio Gall. A red-haired Scottish phrenologist, Gall is comically portrayed in the book as a libertarian anarchist and believer in scientific progress, who has fled imprisonment in Spain, writes political dispatches for a French journal, argues that Satan rather than God is the true rebellious prince of freedom, and who sets out for Canudos to find the living proof of his ideals. In fact, it is the Liberals who are arming Canudos. After three unsuccessful military expeditions, the army, by then thoroughly bedraggled and demoralized, finally crushes the commune in a genocidal fury in the novel's closing chapter.

In the unspeakable hopelessness and desolation of Vargas Llosa's vision of politics, the mythmaking necessary for mobilizing large social forces for change becomes nothing more than, on the one hand, the pitiful utopian dreams of what Fanon called in a different context the 'wretched

of the earth', and, on the other, the quite deliberate lies of the old guard. Nevertheless, even if in a series of ironic reversals, it documents all the necessary components of nation-forming which is its real subject: the sense of religious mission with its attendant violence, the consolidating force of the national press, the treasonous impulses of a ruling clique relying on the aid of European intervention, the proto-socialist coloring of the guerrilla opposition, and the misplaced and naive solidarities of the fellow traveller. Particularly the attention Vargas Llosa gives to the political mythmaking of the 'word' — whether in the form of the prophetic utterances of the 'Counsellor' or the dispatches of the 'myopic journalist' (a central character of the novel) and those of Gall — is characteristic of the cosmopolitan writers of the Third World, who do not participate in the mythmaking, but comment on it metafunctionally. This feature is especially pronounced here since Vargas Llosa's source is da Cunha's legendary 'non-fictional' *Rebellion in the Backlands*.

If political mythmaking is the novel's unifying theme, it is also important for Vargas Llosa to show its attractions to all contestants. In the end, not even the thorough obliteration of Canudos, in which tens of thousands die horribly, can destroy the persistent self-delusion of the dispossessed. Asked by an army colonel what happened to the commune leader Abbot João, an old peasant woman gleefully says in the novel's closing lines, 'Archangels took him up to heaven ... I saw them'. Similarly, in one of the many conversations between Galileo Gall and the stoical landowner, the Baron Canabrava, the image-making of the other side is discussed:

'As is the case with many idealists, [General Moreira Cesar] is implacable when it comes to realizing his dreams ... Just think what's going to happen when that idealist has the monarchists, Angélique insurgents of Canudos at his mercy,' he said in a gloomy voice ... 'He knows that they're really neither one, but it's useful to the Jacobin cause if that's what they are, which amounts to the same thing. And why is he doing what he's doing? For the good of Brazil, naturally. And he believes with all his heart and soul that that's so.'<sup>58</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to think that Vargas Llosa was merely anatomizing a general process — that his cosmopolitanism freed him from the same national obsession found in the writerly milieu he was implicitly critiquing. How can one miss his scornful caricature of liberation theology, for example, in the monstrous Christian 'base camp' that was Canudos? Or how can one fail to read in the 'Counsellor's' confused proto-socialism a fundamentally reactionary cult of the personality? It is very unlikely that he, on some level admirable, fanaticism of the *jaqueros* with its horrible consequences was not inspired very directly by Vargas Llosa's own reading of Peru's Maoist rebels, *Sendero Luminoso* ('Shining Path').

People who study the twentieth century confront a period unlike any other in traditional literary study. Many of the period's social

characteristics are quantitative extensions of characteristics already present in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — including the 'misaffection' of the literary audience, the identity of writer and critic, the systematic commercial and governmental regulation of artistic production. However, others are entirely new, particularly the growth of the international electronic media.

To study the literatures of global dependency is to study traditional cultures, which are especially sensitive to the effects of these media. The late twentieth century is witnessing the universal reach of a culture of unimaginable immediacy — a culture of 'instant' heroes, 'instant' tragedy, 'instant' record-breaking, 'instant' classics. This is, first of all, a function of the technologies which allow for 'instant' communication. But there is more to it than that; as always, the socially specific causes lie behind a facade of impersonal technology. That is, 'immediacy' is also the expression of the changeable policies of the institutions which have increasingly established control over the dispersal of images. At no time more than the present has it been possible to see the triumph of elusive 'forms', and imaginative constructs of color, sound, and words on celluloid, plastic, and paper — a triumph over the concrete acts these 'forms' resemble but cannot replace.

So the study of contemporary fiction, above all in these neocolonial contexts, is always a comment on the responsible practice of interpreting the images of *today* — how to place them, how to give them perspective, how to discuss the way they reflect a submerged history while turning it into a contemporary, instantaneous shadow.

## Notes

- 1 Quoted in Peter Worsley, *The Third World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 5.
- 2 Raymond Williams, *The Year 2000* (New York: Pantheon, 1983).
- 3 Armand Marcabert, 'Introduction', in *Communications and Class Struggle*, vol. 2 (New York: International General, 1983), p. 57.
- 4 Paul Ricoeur, 'Civilization and national cultures', in *History and Truth* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965), pp. 276–7.
- 5 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1977), p. 5.
- 6 See, for example, Fredric Jameson's 'Third-World literature in the era of multinational capital', *Social Text*, no. 15 (Fall 1986), pp. 65–88. This essay was written before Jameson's piece, which appeared following a conference on 'The Challenge of Third World Culture' at Duke University in September 1986 at which sections of the present essay were delivered. See also the response to his essay by Ajay Abraham, 'Jameson's Rhetoric of otherness and the "National Allegory"', in *Social Text*, no. 17 (Fall 1987), pp. 3–25.
- 7 See Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso and New Left Books, 1983); as well as introductory chapters of overviews of so-called 'Commonwealth' literature, Bruce King's *The New English Literatures* (London: Macmillan, 1980). For a work not restricted either to English or Third World contexts, see H. Ernest Lewald's anthology *The Cry of Home*, 1972.



- 8 Examples might include Edward Said, Ariel Dorfman, Hugh Ridley, Amin Barakat, Homi Bhabha, Jean Franco, Abdul JanMohamed, Cornell West, and others.
- 9 Gordon Lewis, *Slavery, Imperialism, and Freedom: Studies in English Radical Thought* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 304. For the French tradition see Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 27, with its discussion of France-based North African writers such as Mehdi Charef, Driss Chraïbi, and Rachid Boudjedra.
- 10 Salman Rushdie, 'The Empire writes back with a vengeance', *The Times*, 3 July, 1982, p. 8.
- 11 Ariel Dorfman, *The Empire's Old Clothes* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), p. 8.
- 12 For the purposes of this study, by far the best works on the nation are Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso and New Left Books, 1983); Horace Davis, *Towards a Marxist Theory of Nationalism* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1978); Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (New York and Cincinnati: Van Nostrand Company, 1965); Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: New Left Books, 1977); Peter Worsley, *The Third World*; and, Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* — particularly, *Anderson, Worsley and Nairn*.
- 13 Anderson, op. cit., p. 12.
- 14 See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Essex: Anchor Press, 1960), p. 63: "'Only one language,' says Schleiermacher, 'is firmly implanted in an individual . . . For every language is a particular mode of thought and what is cogitated in one language can never be repeated in the same way in another'". This was the philosophical foundation in Germany for a much broader social movement described by Carlos José Mariátegui citing Francesco de Sanctis: 'In the history of the West, the flowering of national literatures coincided with the political affirmation of the nation. It formed part of the movement which, through the Reformation and the Renaissance, created the ideological and spiritual factors of the liberal revolution and the capitalist order'. *Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. 183.
- 15 The phrase is Anderson's. See also Anthony Barnett, 'Salman Rushdie: a review article', *Race and Class*, Winter 1985, p. 94: 'The novel as a literary form, like the newspaper, was one of the conductors of, and remains part of, the essential chorus for the rise of nations and nationalism.'
- 16 The phrase is Anderson's.
- 17 Mariátegui, pp. 187–8.
- 18 Ernest Gellner, quoted in Anderson, p. 15.
- 19 See Worsley, op. cit., p. 130: 'To what extent does this ideological emphasis upon the "unity" of the nation and the homogeneity of society reflect a real absence of social differentiation in the new societies, and to what extent is it merely another instance of the familiar rhetoric of all nationalists who, from Fichte onwards, have always appealed to an often spurious solidarity embracing all classes and conditions of the nation . . . ?'
- 20 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 7.
- 21 Anderson, op. cit., p. 35.
- 22 Michael Holquist (with Katerina Clark), *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984) has tried to divorce Bakhtin from the tradition of the Russian school of social critics (Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky) and fix him within Russian formalism and a kind of mystical enthusiasm for the complexity and plenitude of the 'interstice', by which Holquist means the principles of 'psychological depth' and 'political pluralism'. To do so, he 'socialize' it, but his deliberate and savage attacks on literary modernism and psychoanalysis. As a whole, Holquist has interpreted Bakhtin's assault on the orthodoxies of fixed language to be veiled attacks on Stalinism; but it is much more likely that they were attacks on the belletrism, scientism, and obscurantism of western cultural practice. Tzvetan Todorov (*Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984)) emphasizes 'heteroglossia', and interprets it (incorrectly) to be a kind of prototype of Julia Kristeva's impersonal 'interculturality'.
- 23 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and novel', in Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (eds) *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 12.
- 24 Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 13.
- 25 Hobsbawm, op. cit., p. 5.
- 26 Anderson, op. cit., p. 19.
- 27 Régis Debray, 'Marxism and the national question', *New Left Review*, no. 105, Sept.–Oct. 1977, p. 26.
- 28 Debray op. cit. p. 27 (his emphasis).
- 29 See 'Populism', in Worsley, op. cit., pp. 118–74.
- 30 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 491.
- 31 Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 38.
- 32 Bruce King, *The New English Literatures* (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 42.
- 33 Bakhtin, op. cit., p. 30.
- 34 Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogic Principle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 58.
- 35 Walter Benjamin, 'The storyteller: reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov', *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 87.
- 36 Benjamin, op. cit., p. 88.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
- 39 Typical of the better accounts of nationalism is this restless paradox of Nairn's: 'There are not two brands of nationalism, one healthy and one morbid. The point is that, as the most elementary comparative analysis will show, all nationalism is both healthy and morbid', op. cit., p. 347.
- 40 Kedourie, op. cit., p. 54.
- 41 Kohn, op. cit., p. 9.
- 42 Fascism haunts the studies of Kohn, Kedourie, and Hayes especially.
- 43 Herbert Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976), p. 1.
- 44 According to Eric Hobsbawm, for example, 'The evidence is overwhelming that at this stage [in the nineteenth century] the crux of nationalist movements was not so much state independence as such, but rather the constructions of "viable" states [with the intention of creating the internal conditions (e.g. a "national-market") and the external conditions for the development of "national economy" through state organization and action]'. Eric Hobsbawm, 'Some reflections on "The break-up of Britain"', *New Left Review*, no. 105, Sept.–Oct. 1977. On the contrary, he continues, 'the characteristic nationalist movement of our time is separatist, aiming at the break-up of existing states'.

Hobsbawm might have added — not only states, but empires.

45 Anderson, section on 'Dynamic nationalism in *Imagined Communities*.

46 Nairn, op. cit., p. 311.

47 Kohn, op. cit., p. 89.

48 *ibid.*, p. 11.

49 *ibid.*, p. 12.

50 *Many Voices, One World* (Macbride Commission Report) (New York: UNESCO, 1980).

51 Schiller, op. cit., p. 1.

52 Edward Said, 'The mind of winter, reflections on life in exile', *Harper's Magazine*, vol. 269, no. 161, Sept. 1984, p. 50.

53 Hartlow, op. cit., p. 14.

54 Jeffrey Meyers, *Fiction and the Colonial Experience* (Ipswich: Boydell Press, 1974), p. vi.

55 Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Emigrés* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), pp. 9–10.

56 Eagleton, op. cit., p. 18.

57 Frantz Fanon, op. cit., pp. 247–8.

58 Mario Vargas Llosa, *The War of the End of the World* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1984), p. 248.

## 5 *Irresistible romance: the foundational fictions of Latin America*

Doris Sommer

### An archeology of the 'Boom'

When Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa and Julio Cortázar, among others, apparently burst onto the world literary scene of the 1960s and 1970s, they gave the impression that nothing really notable preceded them in Latin America. That impression was reinforced at home by a regional euphoria created, in part, by Castro's triumph in 1959. Revolution promised immediate liberation after the frustrations and disappointments with the gradual evolutionism of older liberal projects. Together with the mass consciousness industries that spread the celebratory mood, the new politics produced an inflated belief that Latin America had finally come of age. It had finally begun to overcome economic dependency by naming it, and to formulate a cultural independence by canalizing the range of European traditions, turning them into mere raw material in purposefully naive American hands.<sup>1</sup> Believing that the new literature, known as the Boom, had *invented* a truly proper language, it seemed that the Adamic dream had come true. Latin Americans could finally (re)name the world and, in doing so, name themselves. Caliban could at last possess his own kingdom.

While some critics doubt whether the Boom was a literary phenomenon at all, arguing instead that it was a promotional explosion, the novels themselves show a distinct family resemblance, enough in fact to produce a checklist of Boom characteristics. These include a demotion, or defusion, of authorial control and tireless formal experimentation, all it seems, directed towards demolishing the straight line of traditional narrative. That line generally coincides with the 'positivist' mainstream of Latin American thought which combines a reverence for positive or 'scientific' data along with the assumption that the social sciences should take the physical sciences as their models. Learning about European positivism in Latin America was like learning that people spoke in prose. It was already a habit of thought by the mid-nineteenth century which had developed, as it did in Europe, from certain disappointments with revolutionary idealism. Herbert Spencer's organicism was especially popular, along with a Comptian schema of progressive stages in

of freedom. Its most powerful form — cultural nationalism — was in fact developed *against* imperialism. Herder, who invents the word 'nationalism' (in German), links a series of concepts — *Volk*, *Bildung*, language-as-consciousness-and-act, empathy, organic form, in an effort to connect with, and respect, what we must now call other cultures.<sup>3</sup> But this conceptual chain immediately penetrates imperialism — in a twist indicative of the way a single discourse may work to contradictory ends. For the notions 'culture' and 'nation' align, early-nineteenth-century Europe becoming a scene of individual cultures chasing after nationhood. Imperialist thought possesses itself of culturalism then, too, because cultures are even more worth fighting for than nations: hierarchies of cultures seeming to fix identities, whereas hierarchies of nations merely seeming to belong to history and politics. Under this dispensation an imperialist nation, competing with others, must regard itself as having a world-historical culture.

Despite the anti-imperialist intentions of culturalism at its founding moment, another dispensation — that of a nationalism *not* connected to culturalism — stands as this chapter's point of departure. I refuse the position, shared by most humanists, modernists, and Marxists, that nationalism is an essentially nasty ideological formation. It is important immediately to remember that nationalism has different effects and meanings in a peripheral nation than in a world power. Against the Hazlitt of my motto, nationalism is perhaps reason's creature least of all in 'great states'. And let us also remember that the nation-state is, for better or worse, the political institution which has most efficacy and legitimacy in the world as it is. Modernity reproduces itself in nation-states, there are few signs of it happening otherwise. To reject nationalism absolutely or to refuse to discriminate between nationalisms is to accede to a way of thought by which intellectuals — especially postcolonial intellectuals — cut themselves off from effective political action.

So I believe that today, in writing in a First World colony like Australia, one ought to be nationalistic. This is a position all the easier to take in Australia, because here, unlike many Third World countries, nationalism is not used *against* large minority racial/tribal groups. Here nationalism can retain a link with freedom in allowing us to resist cultural and economic imperialism, and to remain outside the technology of nuclear war which, with modern communication systems, largely defines internationalism today. It reminds us that we are *not* historically or politically, simply on the side of the major powers. These are important points which I simply state here — and they lead us at once to ask: what is one defending *against* the encroachments of cultural, economic, military imperialism if not a culture?

Less and more. One is defending a set of customs, memories, possibilities for controlling, developing, and redistributing one's own resources, some of which make up units in what becomes, for culturalism, a totalizing web, others of which do not. This means that nationalism may operate for a wide variety of different groups within the nation — though it need not imply 'multiculturalism', a concept which

## 8 Literature — Nationalism's other? The case for revision

Simon During

Patriotism, in modern times, and in great states, is and must be the creature of reason and reflection, rather than the offspring of physical or local attachment. It was once said by an acute observer, and eloquent writer (Rousseau), that the love of mankind was nothing but the love of justice; the same might be said, with considerable truth, of the love of our country. It is little more than another name for the love of liberty, of independence, of peace, of social happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Some years ago Edward Said complained: 'if the body of objects we study — the corpus formed by works of literature — belongs to, gains coherence from, and in a sense emanates out of, the concepts of nation, nationality, and even of race, there is very little in contemporary critical discourse making these actualities possible as subjects of discussion'.<sup>2</sup> His remarks have born fruit, and discussion already shows signs of congealing into orthodoxy. It is becoming a commonplace that the institution of literature works to nationalist ends. This chapter works in the spirit of revision (in part — as we shall see — because it is written in Australia). I want to draw attention to the ways that, at least since the founding of the modern state, literature has operated in different social spaces than nationalism, employing different signifying practices. Furthermore I want to argue that literary criticism canonizes those texts which do not simply legitimate nationhood.

This is not to deny literature's ability to function as a signifier of national identity or heritage. One must also accept that in so far as the history of the West is a tale of exploitation of other societies, all European cultural practices are touched by imperialism. Yet nationalism is something other than imperialism writ as large as this. It is, quite specifically, the battery of discursive and representational practices which define, legitimate, or valorize a specific nation-state or individuals as members of a nation-state. Nationalism attaches to the modern state, revealing itself fully in subjects whose being is saturated by their nationality.

One can certainly be nationalist without being imperialist. Indeed, as the citation from Hazlitt indicates, nationalism has often seemed a mode

retains ties both to liberal pluralism and to culturalism.

One is also defending one's right to make particular and local appropriations of reason. We can take it for granted that reason today is neither a dream of order nor an instrument, as it was for the Enlightenment: still less the grounds of the real as it was for idealism. We can best characterize it as a self-reflective mode of reading what lies either present to hand or stored in the archive. Today reason is 'theory', and, in a familiar list, it undercuts claims to identity, belief in origins as defining essences and the view that language is a transparent tool for expression or communication. When one defends the local within given political institutions at the same time as one heeds reason as theory then it is unproductive simply to denounce, for example the literary canon as nationalistic. At the very least it becomes important to examine varieties of nationalism as well as the historical dislocations between literature and legitimations of nation.

These remarks, which indicate a point of departure, have been general and tendentious. I would like to develop them by offering an account of the relations between one form of literature and nationalism in the UK during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This period is crucial because it is then that both literature and nationalism take on modern forms. But given time limits, this account cannot help but be synoptic and abstract in turn. This is more than a self-serving apology. For the difficulty of the task is determined by the fact that when one no longer regards nationalism negatively, when one stresses politics against culture, and when, thus, one finds oneself unable to treat names such as 'literature', 'nationalism', and most of all, 'culture' itself as if they connect unproblematically to the production of discourse, then one is again in the situation that Said describes. The shorthand used by current thought seems no longer adequate.

Nationalism is often said to start in the period of the French Revolution. This is too simple, for even if one grants that modern nationalism is a moment in the immense upheavals of that era, it retains ties with a history of legitimization of the nation-state which goes back at least into the Renaissance. For my purposes the best moment to interrupt this history is by considering the use of the word 'patriotism' in the early eighteenth century, as it is there that the home country, as a concept, enters into modern political debate, and thus into those aspects of nationalism which retain their vigour.

The word 'patriotism' first became current as part of the Tory resistance to Walpole headed by Bolingbroke, author of *The Idea of a Patriot King*. Here a patriot is a person defined in a classical sense by his love of country rather than personal ambition. For Bolingbroke, Walpole's Whigs forgo the name 'patriot' in ruling through the new financial institutions — the Bank, the Stock Market, the Public Debt, and a Parliament semi-independent of the monarch; in short, by the post-1688 economic and political order. Thus patriotism is given value in an anti-statist, anti-economist (though not anti-mercantile), anti-urban

discourse. A patriot is neither an 'enthusiast' concerned with his or her inner life and relation to God, nor an urbanite interested in money and civility. The patriot king (who, unlike the Hanoverians, should be a native) would communicate directly to the people, without mediation by the state or politicians, in unison with the aristocracy. His constituency is not of course the population at large but those who own land. Thus the word 'country' here tends to oscillate between naming the sum of estates in the realm and the object of sentiments self-consciously borrowed from Roman formulations of *patria*.

This does not, of course, make Bolingbroke's concept of patriotism coherent. For him the word is ultimately used in a game whose aim is political power. Thus, too, the slipperiness of his discourse:

Patriotism has, in all Ages and Nations, been acknowledged a glorious virtue, and the more generous the Genius of a People is, the more Honor do they pay to those Fathers of Mankind, who, being actuated by the noble Principles of universal and unconfined Benevolence, have made the welfare of their Country, their great and only Care . . . .<sup>5</sup>

Here patriotism merges both toward a notion of a people's genius, which is not quite a national character, and toward 'universal and unconfined Benevolence'. How can such benevolence operate only for the welfare of one country? More than a ghost of an invisible hand is at work here as local benevolences produce universal order; there are particular and determining discursive absences. What is missing is the concept of 'humanity' transcending mere nationality, and the concomitant concept of 'culture' as moulding specific peoples and individuals. These notions are connected: only when individuals and their practices are perceived to be wholly informed by cultures do abstract notions like humanity arise. Humanity is what belongs to peoples beyond culture. Also missing is 'liberty', the central attribute of humanity for Enlightenment thought. Benevolence is a private, oligarchic virtue, not a right as the Enlightenment conceived liberty to be.

So Bolingbroke's patriotism stands outside humanism, cultural nationalism, and enlightened rationality. It is itself a virtue *everywhere*, making a claim to universality even as it attaches to specific English legal and social institutions: to the constitution.<sup>6</sup> Bolingbroke appeals to the civic and legal rights of the 'freedom Englishman': trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, the right to privacy, in a list which varies according to context. These rights, which predate the Norman yoke, shape English liberty. The 'constitution' stands for institutions which resist the state power being used by the Whigs to make room for the free play of the market.<sup>7</sup> But given its rhetorical force against the new order, the discourse which valorizes the constitution soon changes hands, coming to signify a wider liberty. As the century proceeds, it works as the official mark of enlightened opposition and by the 1780s dominates the discourse of English radicalism.<sup>8</sup> A constitutional patriot is no longer a Jacobite Tory but a reformer — even a revolutionary.

When one considers all this in the light of eighteenth-century literary

writing familiar today, it is clear that these shifting notions of patriotism are lost to English departments. Canonized literature operates elsewhere, even in Tories like Fielding. Swift, and Pope. Take, for example, Pope's 'First Dialogue' in his *Epilogues to the Satires*, an important repository of early patriot wit though I suspect not much taught or remembered these days. It is on this unusual occasion of overt patriotism, that Pope includes his encomium for Ralph Allen, the private founder of the modern public postal system. As the explicit, if idealized, model for Allworth in *Tom Jones*, Allen becomes the symbol for a kind of Englishness in another literary mode. This is not surprising: Allen's work is crucial in the development of modern communication systems, in the homogenizing of Britain. His work is the precondition not only of the epistolary novel, but of the radical corresponding societies later in the century. When Fielding and Pope make him a symbol of Tory patriotism they join the effort to manage the shift into modernity from the side of the old order.

What has happened to the discourse of patriotism itself? It is not just a part of the archive which remains uncanceled — in the poem itself Pope's patriot wit quickly shifts into a proto-nationalist symbolization. Allen's reputation is tuned to literary use, in an early instance of a different kind of signifying practice, one rare in canonized literature. An actual person becomes an icon of a particular kind of universal modernizing benevolence whose acceptability lies in its vague Englishness. But the shift from universal benevolence to Englishness *fully* occurs only later when, after the Napoleonic wars (Pope having acquired quite another kind of reputation),<sup>9</sup> Fielding's work enters the world of 'Merric England'. Fielding's novels are in general ... thoroughly English' as Hazlitt will say.<sup>10</sup> Little here remains of radical patriotism.

At its centre, however, writing in eighteenth-century England is not dominated by polite letters nor by the production of 'Englishness'. It begins to form a new cultural space — which I shall call, not very satisfactorily, the civil imaginary. This is a notion, though not a word, I take from recent work on the history of the novel inspired by Foucault.<sup>11</sup> The term names prose writings which provide representations of social existence from the beginning of the eighteenth century through the period of the classic realist and novel and beyond. At its beginnings the civil imaginary does not cover just what we would today call fiction: Addison and Steele's journalism stand at its point of emergence. What these writings have in common with Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding's novels is the production of narratives, moral cruces, a linguistic decorum, and character types which cover the social field of the post-1688 world.

The civil imaginary is an attempt to order what Steele calls 'the uncontrollable jumble of Persons and Things' in that society.<sup>12</sup> Thus its purpose is in part ethical in the Foucauldian sense. It produces representations of manners, taste, behaviour, utterances for imitation by individual lives. Its sphere is secular — that is, not religiously enthusiastic. It is *not* political (it relies on what Habermas has called the modern split

between politics and ethics),<sup>13</sup> it is not dominated by the old caste system, not determined by classical and Renaissance *virtu*. Its prime value is a sociability which cannot be expressed in terms of moral laws. It reproduces everyday life in the public domain, reducing the gap between the divine/moral order and actual behaviour, thereby replacing the old science of casuistry by the modern domination of the life-world by style and civility. One might say that the older aristocratic humanism becomes bourgeoisified in it; one might say that it is part of a process of the feminization of society; one might say that it replaces the law of the father, the absolutist order, with autonomous subjects regulated by internalized representations ... many such descriptions are available. More important to my purposes: writings carrying this system of ethics take the form of letters, memoirs, travellers' tales, club papers, histories. Their 'truth' or 'falsity' is secondary to the task of representation itself. And they remain in the formalist sense, 'motivated'. The narrator is explicitly socially located in the writing, the text's occasion being made apparent.

These remarks leave many gaps open. Let me attempt to fill one. Representations are produced from certain points of view. And it is clear that the civil imaginary emerges in the writings of Whigs — Addison and Steele, Richardson. Their texts are a sympathetic attempt to circulate images of the forms of social existence available to the urban bourgeoisie of the time. They are Whigs both in their unpatriotic tolerance of the market — money and consumption; and their sense that the present and future belong to them. They reject the network of social obligations and duties which informed the official attitudes of the landed gentry. And publicly to circulate representations of the workings of the legal, medical, and military institutions (as even Fielding and Smollett do) is to provide grounds for certain reforms, that is, once again, for the transfer to modern power. Whiggish, too, is their susceptibility to the sheer glamour of the process of social representation, the drawing of the new into the recognizable, and their blindness as to the consequences of their exclusion of the 'vulgar'.

In an act of implicit resistance, Fielding and Smollett offer representations and narratives which both cover more diverse social range than their forbears and present images of more static social and individual drives. Fielding in particular can *narrativize* the civil imaginary just because he wishes to insist that the limits of society and morality are also the limits of nature and tradition. The Fielding plot, so much stronger than that of his peers, enacts the closure of society-as-nature on society-as-manners each time the illegitimate or 'natural' son becomes a legitimate heir. (Of course, the narrative's energy derives from the fact that the hero has no father until the very end.) Yet such differences, and the political nuances behind them, become lost in the space of the imaginary itself — as Sir Andrew Freepport, Roderick Random, Partridge, Lovelace, Moll, Parson Adams, and their stories, along with journalistic and novelistic descriptions of things, streets, houses, towns, and the presentation of tricky moral situations acquire their own effectiveness and being.

The power of representations to disencumber themselves of their politics does not merely testify to the gap between mimetic systems and action. That power is also an effect of the linguistic vehicle which carries the civil Imaginary. It is adumbrated by Steele in his advice to letter writers: 'no rule in the world [is] to be made for writing letters, but that of being as near to what you speak face to face as you can'.<sup>14</sup> This immediacy, marked on the one side by an absence of traditional rhetorical topoi, and on the other by the represented presence of an observer, constitutes and links the novelty of letters and journalism. (Its precondition is of course the technology of the novel.) Unlike older forms — the comic, the tragic — the modern civil Imaginary consists of characters who do not have stories told of them again and again. Characters in novels live and die once — in *their* novel. Ethical representations are immediate to the degree that they trace themselves on the consciousness of an observer — either invisible and omniscient like Mr Spectator, or a historian like Fielding's narrative voice, or a character with a personality and a lingering debt to the old rogue tales like Moll. Their realism then is dependent on a certain subjectivity, even if it remains, when fullest, the subjectivity of instances of a type. As the civil Imaginary responds to social and political forces, this subjectivity will hollow itself more and more into the substance of the observed, as well as the observers, until it becomes the focus, and, more importantly, the legitimization of modern representation in its own right.

The civil Imaginary lives on. Poetry has gone through several revolutions since Pope, but fiction — though it has been transformed — occupies recognizably the same discursive space in Defoe and Richardson as in, say, Christina Stead and Pynchon. It is this continuity, this immense social effectiveness, that places the civil Imaginary at the very centre of the institution of modern literature. I hope it is already clear that its task has not been the task of nationalism. For it works *within* a society as part of the effort to know (and thus, in part and at several removes, to control) a particular social field. Being embedded within a society, it assumes and works on a set of social connections rather than promotes a national character. Comparisons of national types, dependent upon a cosmopolitan or a 'meta' point of view, are not essential to it.

We have arrived at the moment of the French Revolution. Now both English nationalism and the civil Imaginary (within its basic continuity) undergo profound shifts. Let us consider nationalism first. For revolutionary France, in the words of Abbé Sieyès, 'The nation is prior to everything. It is the source of everything. Its will is always legal. . . . Nations on earth must be conceived of as individuals outside the social bond, or, as is said, in the state of nature'.<sup>15</sup> Opposing classes become the nation whose own rights are natural rather than civic or legal. In France the replacement of the ancient concept 'people' by abstract rights granted to the nation is all the easier because there never was a constitutionally 'freedom' Frenchman to stand alongside the 'freedom Englishman'. There, following Rousseau, natural rights do not immediately replace civic and legal ones at the level of the individual.

The nation derives its legitimacy from nature and reason: each individual must act in terms of the general national will. It is English radicals like Paine who, drawing on Locke, appeal to the *individual's* natural rights as the standard for, and roots of, civic ones.

The French legitimization of the nation has profound effects. In replacing custom by rights it denies history, as counter-revolutionary voices were quick to note. Politics becomes inadmissible as a way of negotiating social conflicts, for as members of one nation, all individuals have the same interest.<sup>16</sup> Civil society and the state merge into one realm of general will and rational freedom. Individuals as nationalized subjects become not a diverse and hierarchical mixture of different manners and customs, but transparent and equal to one another. And a whole range of symbolic practices enter the public sphere: the wearing of liberty caps, planting of liberty trees, images of the republic as Marianne, the tricolour, carnivals . . . . These are not the representations of the civil Imaginary, which are based on the circulation of mimetic images, on the dissemination and ranking of social differences, but non-mimetic emblems ('allegoric shapes' Wordsworth called them)<sup>17</sup> intended, as Abbé Grégoire put it, to penetrate the soul and mould the national character.<sup>18</sup>

With the birth of the new French nation, other European nationalisms shudder and change. Each state acquires a national identity which covers all its activities in imitation of, and differentiation from, the French contraction into national unity. It is now that each country has, for example, as Heine says paradoxically, not only 'its own cuisine and its own kind of woman' but that 'considered from the point of view of high idealism' women have 'a resemblance to their country's cooking'. He continues exuberantly, taking sexual and nationalist chauvinism to their very edges: 'Are not the British beauties as wholesome, nourishing, substantial and inartistic, yet as excellent as good Old England's simple, honest fare: roast beef, roast mutton, pudding in flaming brandy; vegetables boiled in water, with two kinds of sauces, one of which is melted butter?'<sup>19</sup> Analogies tie the field of national stereotypes together, to help form a culture.

At the same moment, nation and freedom become indivisible. Each nation lays claim to its unique brand of freedom. Passing over profound struggles in each country, we can say that France acquires liberty as national will; Germany — at least in Fichte — liberty as presuppositionless national self-determination. In England liberty exists in and as the historical heritage, which makes it, at once, a liberty which *determines* — with all the difficulties such a paradox implies. Certainly there the counter-revolution gears up its attack on the old discourse of patriotism as liberation. Hazlitt's fragment 'Patriotism' from which my motto comes is one of its last flickers. Indeed, as Linda Colley has argued, the British government resisted using even the new nationalist symbolic practices just because they might lead to revolution at home.<sup>20</sup> And in the burgeoning of the state apparatus to fight the wars, repress opposition, and spur on a rationalized market, common law is eroded, replaced

through the 1820s by an extended legal code. The constitution, though appealed to still, becomes an increasingly abstract signifier for national liberation as radical demand, more narrowly, representation in a parliament which 'represents the nation'.<sup>21</sup>

Burke sets the agenda for counter-revolution in England. He emphasizes preservation rather than reason. 'We do now wish to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers' he claims, and that implicit turn to family composes the very basis of his thought.<sup>22</sup> For him, civil society must be defended against the state, whose operation begins to require unpalatable notions of bureaucratic rationality. Such a defence is found in the hierarchical structure and filiative possibilities of the family. Because he believes the family to be both a natural and a social form, it provides the site at which nature and society meet. This enters more deeply into his thought than the effort to make of the 1689 Bill of Rights a binding contract. For it begins to solve the problem of authority which besets him. The instance just given indicates his quantity. Does the 1689 contract provide authority to defeat a rational, and totalizing, national will? Does nature? Tradition? The appeal to the family screens the conflicts between, and difficulties in, these alternatives, providing a substitute for theories of natural law.

Burke belongs to political nationalism in so far as he too accepts the nation as the legitimizing socio-political unit. 1688 is vitally important for him because then the nation agreed on a decentred political system. But, he figures the nation in institutions which resist the appeal of enlightened nationalism, turning to the family, the church, civil society, a hatred of theory rather than to common law, the state, freedom, language, reason. Indeed his discourse enacts this resistance. For he locates liberty not in thought, not in a national will, ultimately not even in tradition, but, almost unawares, in a personal freedom embedded in the act of writing. It goes without saying that to find liberty there is not to require socio-political change, it is barely to find liberty at all.

The *Reflections* take the form of a letter to a French acquaintance. In the middle of a diatribe against abstract liberty he writes: 'Indulging myself in the freedom of epistolary intercourse, I beg leave to throw out my thought, and express my feelings, just as they arise in my mind, with little attention to formal method'.<sup>23</sup> Almost invisibly, freedom moves from reason and politics to self and language — subjective and sociable, rather than rational or bookish, language. The style evoked a furor despite journalistic and novelistic precedents. In a personal letter his friend Francis scolded: 'Once for all I wish you would let me teach you to write English ... why will you not allow Yourself, to be persuaded, that Polish is material to preservation?'<sup>24</sup> While, from the other side, the *radical* Hazlitt said of Burke's writing that 'it has the solidity, the sparkling effect of a Diamond; all other *fine writing* is like French paste or Bristol stones in comparison'.<sup>25</sup> Under the pressure of revolution, preservation requires solidity as subjective force, not polish; it depends on reproducing an effective prose — that of the civil Imaginary. Burke's is finally the authority of personal and paternal

reasonableness, in a style equidistant from both theory and symbol. Counter-revolution, then, brings with it a crisis of legitimization whose discursive solution is a subjective, widening tone; a foregrounding of personality in propositions which deny freedom and individualism. Its ultimate conceptual solution is an appeal to a familial filiation. These were strategies successful enough to help prevent both nationalism and reason gaining a grip on English high literary culture until our own time. (It is clear that recent British disdain of French poststructuralism has its roots in Burke's detestation of French 'men of theory'.) And Burke's intervention had an immense impact on the sphere of the civil Imaginary. This assertion I wish to develop in the rest of this chapter.

In 1812 Scott published *Waverley*. Like the revolution itself, contemporaries considered it to be without precedent. Goethe's remarks are typical: 'I discover in [Scott] a wholly new art, which has its own laws'.<sup>26</sup> What are these laws? A particular technical device stands as their precondition: Scott's texts are not motivated. Unlike *Tom Jones* to which it is much indebted, *Waverley* does not explain the occasion of its own writing.<sup>27</sup> The past world it describes is like, but adjacent to, archival history. Austen invents the unmotivated novel simultaneously — constructing present adjacent worlds with a realism Scott himself marvelled at. The purpose of these texts is not to construct ethical representations which directly address their readers, but a kind of mimesis for mimesis's sake. It is this autonomy, this retreat from ethics, which Henry James, who shares such values, indicates in his understated description of Scott as 'the first English prose story teller'.<sup>28</sup> With this lack of motivation comes a new principle of organization and delimitation — organic unity. This does not reproduce emerging state totality, nor is it, like Fielding's plot, a sign of the imposition of the natural on the social order. It operates as a formal requirement of autonomous texts intent on providing a scene adjacent to the nation-state. The text's unity is the unity of culture — a set of overlapping, unprogrammable connections and analogies within the strictly delimited frame of the work itself.

Scott and Austen's novels emerge from the civil Imaginary, on the back, as it were, of the Burkean style which now becomes — with its new authority — the 'narrative voice' or 'English prose'. They accept the counter-revolutionary burden of preservation with all its difficulties. As a consequence, they stage peculiarly modern forms of impotence: the inability to reconcile reasons of state and a private morality in Scott; community values and individual self-determination in Austen. In both, personal, presuppositionless acts of will have become impossible. Scott sees individuals as products of a social and cultural inheritance, thus, characters, viewed externally, become instances of large formations — moral, socio-economic, national. The 'international' theme unfolds. But even in Scott, whose characters often are national types, the text itself stands apart from nationalism. Its identity lies with the narrative voice which is, unlike the characters, and like Mr Spectator, everywhere and nowhere, and reproduces, in a new register, an earlier period in the civil Imaginary. The narrative voice becomes available to the abstract

humanism which transcends nations and cultures. That ethical power which produced new images internal to a social framework is transformed into a renunciatory withdrawal into custom, culture, soul-making.

Of course these novels create hierarchies, that is at the very centre of their purpose. They are Burkean civil societies *in petto*. Here is Burke:

Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place. This law is not subject to the will of those, who by an obligation above them and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law. (p. 195)

'Moral nature' here means in effect what is inherited by the individual — culture, dialect, class<sup>29</sup> — all of which are seen to be closed to choice and imitation. 'State' here means civil society, which these classic realist novels defend against the apparatus of the politicians and social managers in the name of submission.

Burke's immutable 'compact' is part of a defence of a cosmic and social 'establishment' which transcends reason and will. When he comes closest to defining this establishment's material being, however, the language of contract and law no longer suffices.

Why should the expenditure of a great landed property, which is a dispersion of the surplus product of the soil, appear intolerable to you or to me, when it takes its course through the accumulation of vast libraries, which are the history of the force and weakness of the human mind; through great collections of ancient records, medals, and coins, which attest and explain laws and customs; through paintings and statues, that, by imitating nature, seem to extend the limits of creation; through grand monuments of the dead, which continue the regards and connexions of life beyond the grave ... (p. 272)

Here we have, in an economist trope, a 'surplus' which undermines its base. Note how paintings and statues *seem* to extend the limits of creation; that 'seeming', however hesitant, undoing all the certainty of the 'primeval contract' which, as the structure of creation, links both earth to heaven and individuals to society. The passage is extraordinary in its rhetorical effort to attach this valuable and unmanageable simulacrum to law and nature. Here again we see the pressures which demand that the Imaginary must work as an index of nature and a guarantee of filiation and reproduction rather than an ethical and *productive* force.

Scott and Austen, too, 'imitate nature' and thus 'extend creation', but, in Burke's spirit, they assuage the danger of the enterprise by forcing their extensions of reality back onto the real. However much their techniques and interests differ, for both, to be imaginative is also to be realistic. Their work allows for the possibility that the more adjacent, the less actual, the textual object; the closer, the more real. In connecting

them, not now to Burke, but to proto-modernists such as Flaubert and James, this constitutes the continuity of classic realism over the nineteenth century. Indeed, later complaints against Scott's being just entertaining and the comparative neglect of Austen are part of a Victorian forgetting of the modernist, aesthetic impulse which surprisingly — given conventional accounts of these matters — is a byproduct of Burkean counter-revolution.

Novels which retreat from the ethical are actually uncommon. Leavis's seminal *The Great Tradition*, which comments on them, does not, I think, select a few works from a mass of others broadly similar. Leavis praises those rare texts which carry out precisely the long task of counter-revolution — though why he ignores *Waverley* remains a mystery to me. This is to imply that the values of *Leavisism* are, in the relevant aspects, those of classic realism. (Many nationalist novels were written between 1800 and 1920, but they are not in his canon.) But in fact the connections between high *Leavisism* and classic realism are mediated through a highly specialized and also, in our society, almost unsustainable discursive practice — literary criticism.

To state a complex matter simply: literary criticism is not literary history, nor interpretation, not theory, not reviewing. Developed by Eliot and Richards, it is an Anglo-American phenomenon with roots in the German moment of Kant and Schiller. At its centre lies the thesis that literary texts cannot be translated simply into propositions or beliefs, and thus neither 'mean' anything, nor are interpretable. Form saturates content, writing is enactment, literature communicates to no specifiable audience but is what is communicated in its own locations. Such notions connect most closely to poetry, and it is with poetry in sight rather than prose or the theatre that literary criticism develops. Only with Leavis does criticism broach the problems posed by the novel. In his work the retreat from ethics in the civil Imaginary connects with literary criticism's ranking of linguistic energy over signification. Here again, literature is the repository of culture, tradition, the life in language itself — an identity which can only be asserted by a rhetorical shuttling back and forth between literature as propositionless force and literature as bulwark against dissolution. Literary criticism enters the project of preservation which works for subjectivity but against both individualism and theory. As such it shares the non-nationalist politics which inform the objects of its approval, maintaining them in the canon.

My argument requires me to indicate one last thread in this story of the relations between certain literary and nationalist zones. Where does nationalism connect with literature *after* the decisive moment of the counter-revolution in England? As the political structure becomes genuinely more democratic, nationalism shifts into modern popular culture. There, using national symbols, the network of analogies, stereotypes, it becomes available for manipulation up until the time of our own patriot monarchs — Maggie, Bob and Ronnie. At the beginning of this redistribution, Hazlitt who was able to write his fragment on patriotism, also produces trite pieces on 'Merrie England' and 'John Bull'



for the *New Monthly Magazine*. As England emerges as a world power, nationalism comes to be defined increasingly in terms of action, war, masculinity, bodies, and less in terms of peace and rights. (It returns, one might say, to Elizabethan and aggressive 'heart of oak' formulations of Englishness.) Perhaps Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843), with its implicitly racist emphasis on England as a body of active men and its explicit repudiation of literature as national culture, is the most important text in this development. (He writes: 'The English are a dumb people. They can do great acts, but not describe them. Like the old Romans, and some few others, their Epic Poem is written on the Earth's surface: England her Mark!')<sup>30</sup> Nationalism, isolated from the domain of the aesthetic civil Imaginary, becomes the property of an apparently depoliticized mass politics. At particular moments, especially between 1867 and 1914, it can re-enter the art novel — with Meredith for instance. But he is precisely not secure in the canon. On the other side, the older patriotic and revolutionary discourse can periodically re-emerge, not applied to Great Britain but to those peoples, whose great year was 1848, struggling for their own independent nationhood.

No text I know represents literature's encounter with nationalism, at the moment they take modern form, better than de Quincy's 1849 reminiscence of the Napoleonic era: *The English Mailcoach*. As the mild ambiguity of the title indicates, the mailcoach which carries news of the British victories signifies the nation. In the forefront of postal technology, the coach represents not civil society but the state, the 'conscious presence of a central intellect' as the text has it. Ralph Allen's spirit lives on. As it races through the country with unwanted discipline and precision, decked in the insignia of victory, it appeals to nationalized subjects. 'One heart, one pride, one glory connects every man by the transcendent bond of his national blood.' But de Quincy is not writing an ode in prose to the spirit of England. He describes an incident in which he fails to prevent the speeding coach from killing a girl. At the moment preceding impact, de Quincy, opiated, and the coachman, asleep, are unable to act. They fail to display exactly that male trait central to the formation of militarized nationalism. The fault is not quite theirs. The mailcoach's power and discipline place it beyond the control of individuals whom it smashes in its way. Action may be the quality of Englishmen, English bodies may beat with one heart, but discipline, inertia, and a tolerance for destruction are now required by the British state. These comments have not reached the core of the text. For the invocation of the modern state, its use of symbols to turn individuals into nationals and de Quincy's own failure to act are followed by accounts of dreams, repeating and interpreting the accident. In the phantasmagoria of the dream-work, the coach becomes a crocodile, de Quincy and the dead girl travel into fantasy colonial islands, the road becomes a cathedral (or railway station?) and so on. The dreams expose another uncontrollable site for his subjectivity:

The dreamer finds housed in himself, some separate chamber in his

brain ... some horrid, alien nature. What if it were his own nature repeated? How if the alien nature contradicts his own, fights with it, perplexes it and confounds it. How again, if not one alien member but two, three, four, within what he once thought the inviolable sanctity of himself?<sup>31</sup>

We see those interconnected entities: the warrior nation-state, disciplined bodies, nationalized subjects open out into what de Quincy calls 'anarchy' — a series of all-governing tropes, associative jumps, subjective depths, onerous rereadings of conscious gaps which neither can be domesticated by classic realism, nor easily appropriated by literary criticism. The essay enacts a series of clashes between various subjectivities each set into a particular socio-political institution, some of which can legitimately precisely *nothing*. It is as if the nationalized subject — de Quincy as an Englishman — shatters that unity of the self needed and granted by the civil Imaginary. A new passivity comes into being — one of whose favoured sites is the dream.

This begins to open up a new field for speculation and historical delving. Here nation and culture fall way from each other, to produce both a fractured psyche, the ground of no authority, and an inorganic text no longer quite at home in the civil Imaginary. This returns us to our point of departure. From the concealments of counter-revolution we have recovered a history of a nationalism which is antagonistic to oppression. Counter-revolution has worked for filiation, culture, and a subjectivity which is not an individualism, against theory as reason and the connection of nations to universals. It not only permits but encourages misrecognition of literature as a national heritage. In it, nationalism is reproduced in the mass public sphere by becoming a poetry which is not poetry, authorized by the state. De Quincy's texts reveals disconnections implicit in this scene. But one can also learn lessons closer to home here. One can learn the need to return to a confidence in the values of theory, to a political sense of history, to a resistance to the retreat of the ethical which occurred in the names of criticism, culture, and realism.

This essay began by declaring that nationalism in postcolonial nations has virtues that perhaps it lacks elsewhere. In the same way, the history of the novel which I have outlined in such broad strokes has particular point for us too — I write now as a citizen of a First World colony. For the postcolonial novel has a specific relation to classic realism. It has used that realism's folding of the Imaginary into the real, to work within a global Imaginary. Global, because the postcolonial writer searches for an audience, a good, which means a metropolitan, audience. In that search messages are sent from (perceived) peripheries to the centre.<sup>32</sup> They move across the globe, picturing their societies so as to connect them to the world. These are not messages sent by mail or mechanical reproduction (like documentaries for instance), they are sent within the punctured, already marginalized forms of representation available to the contemporary novel.

Postcolonial novelists do not have an organized subjectivity which instantiates a type and permits the tones and authority of the old narrative voice, anymore than do other writers after modernism. But for them, while the grounds of classic realism are lost, the project of imagining goes on. It remains important for them to *witness* their society, and their writings, which produce images, remain firmly placed in the imagination either of narcissistic egos, or of magicians. The postcolonial narcissists — the later Patrick White, for instance — have a double focus: on the one hand they describe peripheral societies conceived of as being either extraordinarily empty or extraordinarily full and alive; and, on the other, they foreground themselves and their own life stories as vehicles for representation. Often they exist in their novels both as narrators and as characters — sometimes as a whole series of characters. (They also like to write autobiographies.) The magic realists — in a much stronger move — no longer ground their messages in the authority of their persons, though they continue to trade in experiences which bear traces of feeling and memory. They deliver themselves up to the force of their images: theirs are experiences preternaturally unmoored from subjectivity.

Critics have long since, and for very good reason, given up the task of telling writers how or what to write. Yet it does seem to me that to read the novel's history as developing within the frame of the civil imaginary and counter-revolution is to come to terms with the post-colonial novel, in particular, in ways which might have practical implications. The genre's origins as other to, or resistance against, nationalism should now be seen as a *limit*. To say no more: the interplay between subjectivity and representation which dominates the postcolonial novel, seems to have less force and direction than its societies deserve.

## Notes

- 1 The first version of this paper was written for, and presented, at the 1986 ASPACALS conference on 'National Cultures and Literature' at Deakin University. I would like to thank all those who participated in the discussion for helping focus these ideas. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Dr David Bennett.
- 2 *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe (London: Dent, 1930–4), vol. 4, pp. 67–8.
- 3 'Reflections on American "Left" literary criticism', in *The World, the Text, the Critic* (London: Faber, 1982), p. 169.
- 4 This is something of a commonplace in liberal accounts of Herder — see, for instance, F. M. Barnard, *Herder's Social and Political Thought: from Enlightenment to Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).
- 5 Hugh Seton Watson, *Nations and States: An Inquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, Col.: Westview, 1977), p. 6.
- 6 Lord Bellingbrooke, *Contributions to Craftsman*, ed. Simon Varey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), p. 18.
- 7 See Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle: the Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 27.
- 8 For the complex (but relevant) history of constitutionalism before this period,

- see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 113–78.
- 8 See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 86.
- 9 See James Chandler 'The Pope controversy: Romantic poetics and the English canon', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1984), pp. 481–510.
- 10 *Works*, vol. 6, p. 112.
- 11 See Lennard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1983). This notion is not a version of Castoriadis' much more fully worked out 'social imaginary', though they share a resistance to being reduced to a simple social function. See his *L'institution imaginaire de la société* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 162–204.
- 12 *Selections from The Teller and The Spectator* of Steele and Addison, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 87.
- 13 See J. Habermas, 'The classical doctrine of politics', in *Theory and Practice*, trans. Joñ Viera (London: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 41–82.
- 14 Addison and Steele, op. cit., p. 90.
- 15 Quoted in Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1979), p. 48.
- 16 See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 7–21.
- 17 *The Prelude*, VII, p. 179. Wordsworth is actually writing about advertisements.
- 18 Hunt, op. cit., pp. 91–2.
- 19 *Aus den Memoiren des Herren von Schadowupski in Werke*, ed. Wolfgang Preisenzanz (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1968), vol. 2, p. 536.
- 20 Unpublished paper 'Whose nation? Class and national consciousness in Britain 1750–1830'. I am indebted to Professor Marilyn Butler for drawing my attention to this important paper.
- 21 See the 1821 Yorkshire petition cited in Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791–1819* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), p. 32.
- 22 *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies Relative to that Event*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 117.
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 92.
- 24 *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. 6, ed. Alfred Cobban and Robert A. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 85–7.
- 25 *Works*, XVII, p. 10.
- 26 Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), p. 394.
- 27 It is worth noting that the later 'Tales of my landlord' sequence does contain some such motivation, though it has become supplementary.
- 28 *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers* (New York: Library of America, 1984), p. 1201.
- 29 As Edward Thompson has noted, the 1790s is the decade in which the modern language of class is developed. See the first chapter of *The Making of the English Working Class*.
- 30 *Work and Present* (London: Dent, 1960), p. 151.
- 31 *Collected Writings*, ed. David Masson (London: A. & C. Black, 1897), vol. 12, p. 292. This passage was deleted by de Quincy after the text's first appearance.
- 32 This is much less true of Canadian than it is of Australian, New Zealand, or South American literature.

Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 216–31; Sallie Sears, 'Theater of war: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*' in Jane Marcus (ed.), *Virginia Woolf: a Feminist Slant* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), pp. 212–35.

38 'At this very moment, half-past three on a June day in 1939' (p. 92); 'sitting here on a June day in 1939' (p. 208). Fenrose op. cit., p. 276 points out that 'The thirtieth anniversary of Handley Page Ltd. was on 12th June (1939) — at that time the country was spending almost £2 million a week on aeroplanes.' Living as she did so close to what was then Gatwick aerodrome Woolf could not fail to be aware of the significance of the greatly increased air traffic in the later 1930s and its war menace. When she wrote the novel she was under the flight path of invasion — not now by sea, to be repelled from the island fortress, but by air, with the land below under threat from paratroops and bombs.

39 *Dunry*, vol. 5, p. 297.

## 16 *DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation'*

Homi K. Bhabha

(In memory of Paul Moritz Scrimmel (1914–87):  
Pforzheim — Paris — Zurich — Ahmedabad —  
Bombay — Milan — Lugano.)

### The time of the nation

The title of my essay — *DissemiNation* — owes something to the wit and wisdom of Jacques Derrida, but something more to my own experience of migration. I have lived that moment of the scattering of the people that in other times and other places, in the nations of others, becomes a time of gathering. Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centres; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present. Also the gathering of the people in the diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned; the gathering of incriminatory statistics, educational performance, legal statutes, immigration status — the genealogy of that lonely figure that John Berger named the seventh man. The gathering of clouds from which the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish asks 'where should the birds fly after the last sky?'

In the midst of these lonely gatherings of the scattered people, their myths and fantasies and experiences, there emerges a historical fact of singular importance. More deliberately than any other general historian, Eric Hobsbawm<sup>2</sup> writes the history of the modern western nation from the perspective of the nation's margin and the migrants' exile. The emergence of the later phase of the modern nation, from the mid-nineteenth century, is also one of the most sustained periods of mass migration within the west, and colonial expansion in the east. The nation fills the void left in the uprooting of communities and kin, and turns that loss into the language of metaphor. Metaphor, as the etymology of the word suggests, transfers the meaning of home and belonging, across the 'middle passage', or the central European steppes, across those distances, and cultural differences, that span the imagined community of the nation-people.

The discourse of *nationalism* is not my main concern. In some ways it

is the historical certainty and settled nature of that term against which I am attempting to write of the western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture. This locality is more around temporality than *about* history: a form of living that is more complex than 'community'; more symbolic than 'society'; more connotative than 'country'; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than the reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen; more collective than 'the subject'; more psychic than civility; more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications – gender, race or class – than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism.

In proposing this cultural construction of nationness as a form of social and textual affiliation, I do not wish to deny these categories their specific historicities and particular meanings within different political languages. What I am attempting to formulate in this essay are the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation' and make them the inmanent subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives. My emphasis on the temporal dimension in the inscription of these political entities – that are also potent symbolic and affective sources of cultural identity – serves to displace the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force. The focus on temporality resists the transparent linear equivalence of event and idea that historicism proposes: it provides a perspective on the disjunctive forms of representation that signify a people, a nation, or a national culture. It is neither the sociological solidity of these terms, nor their holistic history that gives them the narrative and psychological force that they have brought to bear on cultural production and projections. It is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy – and an apparatus of power – that it produces a continual slippage into analogues, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or 'cultural difference' that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity.

Edward Said aspires to such secular interpretation in his concept of 'worldiness' where 'sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency ... exist at the same level of surface particularity as the textual object itself' (my emphasis).<sup>3</sup> Fredric Jameson invokes something similar in his notion of 'situational consciousness' or national allegory, 'where the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the collectivity itself'.<sup>4</sup> And Julia Kristeva speaks perhaps too hastily of the pleasures of exile – 'How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex and identity?'<sup>5</sup> – without realizing how fully the shadow of the nation falls on the condition of exile – which may partly explain her own later, labile identifications with the images of *other* nations: 'China', 'America'.

The nation as metaphor: *Amor Patria; Fatherland; Pig Earth; Mother-tongue; Matigari; Middlemarch; Midnight's Children; One Hundred Years of Solitude; War and Peace; I Promise Spies; Kanchipura; Moby Dick; The Magic Mountain; Things Fall Apart*.

There must also be a tribe of interpreters of such metaphors – the translators of the dissemination of texts and discourses across cultures – who can perform what Said describes as the act of secular interpretation. 'To take account of this horizontal, secular space of the crowded spectacle of the modern nation ... implies that no single explanation sending one back immediately to a single origin is adequate. And just as there are no simple dynastic answers, there are no simple discrete formations or social processes'.<sup>6</sup> If, in our travelling theory, we are alive to the *metaphor* of the peoples of imagined communities – migrant or metropolitan – then we shall find that the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal. Their metaphoric movement requires a kind of 'doublet' in writing; a temporality of representation that moves between cultural formations and social processes without a 'centred' causal logic. And such cultural movements disperse the homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society because 'the present is no longer a mother-form (read mother-tongue or mother-land) around which are gathered and differentiated the future (present) and the past (present) ... [as] a present of which the past and the future would be but modifications'.<sup>7</sup> The secular language of interpretation then needs to go beyond the presence of the 'look', that Said recommends, if we are to give 'the nonsequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity its appropriate narrative authority. We need another time of *writing* that will be able to inscribe the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and place that constitute the problematic 'modern' experience of the western nation.

How does one write the nation's modernity as the event of the everyday and the advent of the epochal? The language of national belonging comes laden with atavistic apologies, which has led Benedict Anderson to ask: 'But why do nations celebrate their hoariness, not their astonishing youth?'<sup>8</sup> The nation's claim to modernity, as an autonomous or sovereign form of political rationality, is particularly questionable if, with Partha Chatterjee, we adopt the post-colonial perspective:

Nationalism ... seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment and fails to do so. For Enlightenment itself, to assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; if it could ever actualise itself in the real world as the truly universal, it would in fact destroy itself.<sup>9</sup>

Such ideological ambivalence nicely supports Gellner's paradoxical point that the historical necessity of the idea of the nation conflicts with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national culture. The nation may exemplify modern social cohesion but

Nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems to itself . . . The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred would have served as well. But in no way does it follow that the principle of nationalism . . . is itself in the least contingent and accidental.<sup>10</sup>

The problematic boundaries of modernity are enacted in these ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space. The language of culture and community is poised on the fissures of the present becoming the rhetorical figures of a national past. Historians transfixed on the event and origins of the nation never ask, and political theorists possessed of the 'modern' totalities of the nation — 'Homogeneity, literacy and anonymity are the key traits'<sup>11</sup> — never pose, the awkward question of the disjunctive representation of the social, in this double-time of the nation. It is indeed only in the disjunctive time of the nation's modernity — as a knowledge disjunct between political rationality and its impasse, between the shreds and patches of cultural signification and the certainties of a nationalist pedagogy — that questions of nation as narration come to be posed. How do we plot the narrative of the nation that must mediate between the teleology of progress tipping over into the 'timeless' discourse of irrationality? How do we understand that 'homogeneity' of modernity — the people — which, if pushed too far, may assume something resembling the archaic body of the despot or totalitarian mass? In the midst of progress and modernity, the language of ambivalence reveals a politics 'without duration', as Althusser once provocatively wrote: 'Space without places, time without duration'.<sup>12</sup> To write the story of the nation demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs modernity. We may begin by questioning that progressive metaphor of modern social cohesion — *the many as one* — shared by organic theories of the holism of culture and community, and by theorists who treat gender, class, or race as radically 'expressive' social totalities.

Out of *many one*: nowhere has this founding dictum of the political society of the modern nation — its spatial expression of a unitary people — found a more intriguing *image* of itself than in those diverse languages of literary criticism that seek to portray the great power of the idea of the nation in the disclosures of its everyday life; in the telling details that emerge as metaphors for national life. I am reminded of Bakhtin's wonderful description of a 'national' *vision of emergence* in Goethe's *Italian Journey*, which represents the triumph of the realistic component over the Romantic. Goethe's realist narrative produces a national-historical time that makes visible a specifically Italian day in the detail of its passing time. 'The bells ring, the rosary is said, the maid enters the room with a lighted lamp and says: *Felicitissima morte!* . . . If one were to force a German clockhand on them, they would be at a loss.'<sup>13</sup> For Bakhtin it is Goethe's vision of the microscopic, elementary, perhaps random telling of everyday life in Italy that reveals the profound history of its locality (*Localität*), the spatialization of historical time, 'a creative humanization of

this locality, which transforms a part of terrestrial space into a place of historical life for people'.<sup>14</sup>

The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression. There is, however, always the distracting presence of another temporality that disturbs the contemporaneity of the national present, as we saw in the national discourses with which I began. Despite Bakhtin's emphasis on the realist vision in the emergence of the nation in Goethe's work, he acknowledges that the origin of the nation's visual *presence* is the effect of a narrative struggle. From the beginning, Bakhtin writes, the realist and Romantic conceptions of time co-exist in Goethe's work, but the ghostly (*Gespistermässiges*), the terrifying (*Unbefriedigtes*), and the unaccountable (*Unzuberhörtes*) are consistently 'surmounted' by the structural aspects of the visualization of time: 'the necessity of the past and the necessity of its place in a line of continuous development . . . finally the aspect of the past being linked to a necessary future'.<sup>15</sup> National time becomes concrete and visible in the chronotope of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end. The narrative structure of this *historical* surmounting of the 'ghostly' or the 'double' is seen in the intensification of narrative synchrony as a graphically visible position in space: 'to grasp the most elusive course of pure historical time and fix it through unmediated contemplation'.<sup>16</sup> But what kind of 'present' is this if it is a consistent process of surmounting the ghostly time of repetition? Can this national time-space be as fixed or as immediately visible as Bakhtin claims?

If in Bakhtin's 'surmounting' we hear the echo of another use of that word by Freud in his essay on *The Uncanny*, then we begin to get a sense of the complex time of the national narrative. Freud associates *surmounting* with the repressions of a 'cultural' unconscious; a liminal, uncertain state of cultural belief when the archaic emerges in the midst or margins of modernity as a result of some psychic ambivalence or intellectual uncertainty. The 'double' is the figure most frequently associated with this uncanny process of 'the doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self'.<sup>17</sup> Such 'double-time' cannot be so simply represented as visible or flexible in 'unmediated contemplation'; nor can we accept Bakhtin's repeated attempt to read the national space as achieved only in the *fullness of time*. Such an apprehension of the 'double and split' time of national representation, as I am proposing, leads us to question the homogeneous and horizontal view familiarly associated with it. We are led to ask, provocatively, whether the *emergence* of a national perspective — of an elite or subaltern nature — within a culture of social contestation, can ever articulate its 'representative' authority in that fullness of narrative time, and that visual synchrony of the sign that Bakhtin proposes.

Two brilliant accounts of the emergence of national narratives seem to support my suggestion. They represent the diametrically opposed world views of master and slave which between them account for the major historical and philosophical dialectic of modern times. I am thinking of

John Barrell's<sup>18</sup> splendid analysis of the rhetorical and perspectival status of the 'English gentleman' within the social diversity of the eighteenth-century novel, and of Huston Baker's innovative reading of the 'new national modes of sounding, interpreting and speaking the Negro in the Harlem Renaissance'.<sup>19</sup> In his concluding essay Barrell surveys the positions open to 'an equal, wide survey' and demonstrates how the demand for a holistic, representative vision of society could only be represented in a discourse that was at the same time obsessively fixed upon, and uncertain of, the boundaries of society, and the margins of the text. For instance, the hypostatized 'common language' which was the language of the gentleman whether he be Observer, Spectator, Rambler, 'Common to all by virtue of the fact that it manifested the peculiarities of none'<sup>20</sup> — was primarily defined through a process of negation — of regionalism, occupation, faculty — so that this centred vision of 'the gentleman' is so to speak 'a condition of empty potential, one who is imagined as being able to comprehend everything, and yet who may give no evidence of having comprehended anything'.<sup>21</sup> A different note of liminality is struck in Baker's description of the 'radical maroonage' that structured the emergence of an insurgent Afro-American expressive culture in its expansive, 'national' phase. Baker's sense that the 'discursive project' of the Harlem Renaissance is modernist is based less on a strictly literary understanding of the term, and more appropriately on the agonistic enunciative conditions within which the Harlem Renaissance shaped its cultural practice. The transgressive, invasive structure of the black 'national' text, which thrives on rhetorical strategies of hybridity, deformation, masking, and inversion, is developed through an extended analogy with the guerrilla warfare that became a way of life for the maroon communities of runaway slaves and fugitives who lived dangerously, and insubordinately, 'on the frontiers or margins of all American promise, profit and modes of production'. From this liminal, minority position where, as Foucault would say, the relations of discourse are of the nature of warfare, emerges the force of the people of an Afro-American nation, as Baker 'signifies upon' the extended metaphor of maroonage. For warriors read writers or even 'signs':

these highly adaptable and mobile warriors took maximum advantage of local environments, striking and withdrawing with great rapidity, making extensive use of bushes to catch their adversaries in cross-fire, fighting only when and where they chose, depending on reliable intelligence networks among non-maroons (both slave and white settlers) and often communicating by horns.<sup>22</sup>

Both gentleman and slave, with different cultural means and to very different historical ends, demonstrate that forces of social authority and subalternity may emerge in displaced, even decentered, strategies of signification. This does not prevent them from being representative in a political sense, although it does suggest that positions of authority are themselves part of a process of ambivalent identification. Indeed the exercise of power may be both more politically effective and psychically

*affective* because their discursive liminality may provide greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation. It is precisely in reading between these borderlines of the nation-space that we can see how the 'people' come to be constructed within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement. The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference where the claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address. We then have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. The scraps, patches, and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects. In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuum, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitions, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*.

### The space of the people

The tension between the pedagogical and the performative that I have identified in the narrative address of the nation, turns the reference to a 'people' — from whatever political or cultural position it is made — into a problem of knowledge that haunts the symbolic formation of social authority. The people are neither the beginning or the end of the national narrative; they represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population. The ambivalent signifying system of the nation-space participates in a more general genesis of ideology in modern societies that Claude Léfort has described so suggestively. For him too it is 'the enigma of language', at once internal and external to the speaking subject, that provides the most apt analogue for imagining the structure of ambivalence that constitutes modern social authority. I shall quote him at length, because his rich ability to represent the *movement* of political power *beyond* the blindness of ideology or the insight of the Idea, brings him to that liminality of modern society from which I have attempted to derive the narrative of the nation and its people.

In Ideology the representation of the rule is split off from the effective operation of it. . . . The rule is thus extracted from experience of

language: it is circumscribed, made fully visible and assumed to govern the conditions of possibility of this experience.... The enigma of language — namely that it is both internal and external to the speaking subject, that there is an articulation of the self with others which marks the emergence of the self and which the self does not control — is concealed by the representation of a place 'outside' — language from which it could be generated.... We encounter the ambiguity of the representation as soon as the rule is stated; for its very exhibition undermines the power that the rule claims to introduce into practice. *This exorbitant power must, in fact, be shown, and at the same time it must owe nothing to the movement which makes it appear.... To be true to its image, the rule must be abstracted from any question concerning its origin; thus it goes beyond the operations that it controls.... Only the authority of the master allows the contradiction to be concealed, but he is himself an object of representation; presented as possessor of the knowledge of the rule, he allows the contradiction to appear through himself.*

The ideological discourse that we are examining has no safety catch; it is rendered vulnerable by its attempt to make visible the place from which the social relation would be conceivable (both thinkable and creatable) by its inability to define this place without letting its contingency appear, without condemning itself to slide from one position to another, without hereby making apparent the instability of an order that it is intended to raise to the status of essence.... [The ideological] task of the implicit generalisation of knowledge and the implicit homogenization of experience could fall apart in the face of the unbearable ordeal of the collapse of certainty, of the vacillation of representations of discourse and as a result of the splitting of the subject.<sup>23</sup>

How do we conceive of the 'splitting' of the national subject? How do we articulate cultural differences within this vacillation of ideology in which the national discourse also participates, sliding ambivalently from one enunciatory position to another? What comes to be represented in that unruly 'time' of national culture, which Bakhtin surmounts in his reading of Goethe, Gellner associates with the rags and patches of everyday life, Said describes as 'the nonsequential energy of lived historical memory and subjectivity' and Lefort re-presents again as the inexorable *movement of signification* that both constitutes the exorbitant image of power and deprives it of the certainty and stability of centre or closure? What might be the cultural and political effects of the liminality of the nation, the margins of modernity, which cannot be signified without the narrative temporalities of splitting, ambivalence, and vacillation?

Deprived of the unmediated visibility of historicism — 'looking to the legitimacy of past generations as supplying cultural autonomy'<sup>24</sup> — the nation turns from being the symbol of modernity into becoming the symptom of an ethnography of the 'contemporary' within culture. Such a shift in perspective emerges from an acknowledgement of the nation's interrupted address, articulated in the tension signifying the people as an

*a priori* historical presence, a pedagogical object; and the people constructed in the performance of narrative, its enunciatory 'present' marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign. The pedagogical goals its narrative authority in a tradition of the people, described by Poulantzas<sup>25</sup> as a moment of becoming designated by itself, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represents an eternally produced by self-generation. The performative interventions in the sovereignty of the nation's *self-generation* by casting a shadow between the people as 'image' and its signification as a differentiating sign of Self, distinct from the Other or the Outside. In place of the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation itself and extrinsic Other nations, the performative introduces a temporality of the 'in-between' through the 'gap' or 'emptiness' of the signifier that punctuates linguistic difference. The boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of national production with a space of representation that threatens binary division with its difference. The barred Nation *It/Self*, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal form of social representation, a space that is *internally* marked by cultural difference and the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations.

This double-writing or *dissemi-nation*, is not simply a theoretical exercise in the internal contradictions of the modern liberal nation. The structure of cultural liminality — *within the nation* — that I have been trying to elaborate would be an essential precondition for a concept such as Raymond Williams' crucial distinction between residual and emergent practices in oppositional cultures which require, he insists, a 'non-metaphysical, non-subjectivist' mode of explanation. Such a space of cultural signification as I have attempted to open up through the intervention of the performative, would meet this important precondition. The liminal figure of the nation-space would ensure that no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves. This is because the subject of cultural discourse — the agency of a people — is split in the discursive ambivalence that emerges in the contestation of narrative authority between the pedagogical and the performative. This disjunctive temporality of the nation would provide the appropriate time-frame for representing those residual and emergent meanings and practices that Williams locates in the margins of the contemporary experience of society. Their designation depends upon a kind of social ellipsis; their transformational power depends upon their being historically displaced.

But in certain areas, there will be in certain periods, practices and meanings which are not reached for. There will be areas of practice and meaning which, almost by definition from its own limited character, or in its profound deformation, the dominant culture is unable in any real terms to recognize.<sup>26</sup>

When Edward Said suggests that the question of the nation should be put on the contemporary critical agenda as a hermeneutic of 'worldliness', he

is fully aware that such a demand can only now be made from the liminal and ambivalent boundaries that articulate the signs of national culture, as 'zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing' (my emphasis).<sup>27</sup>

Counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries – both actual and conceptual – disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities. For the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space, bounded by different, even hostile nations, into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality, in the patriotic, atavistic temporality of Traditionalism. Quite simply, the difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One. The liminal point of this ideological displacement is the turning of the differentiated spatial boundary, the 'outside', into the unified temporal territory of Tradition. Freud's concept of the 'narcissism of minor differences'<sup>28</sup> – reinterpreted for our purposes – provides a way of understanding how easily that boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the western nation may imperceptibly turn into a contentious *internal* liminality that provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exile, the marginal, and the emergent.

Freud uses the analogy of feuds that prevail between communities with adjoining territories – the Spanish and the Portuguese, for instance – to illustrate the ambivalent identification of love and hate that binds a community together: 'it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left to receive the manifestation of their aggressiveness'.<sup>29</sup> The problem is, of course, that the ambivalent identifications of love and hate occupy the same psychic space; and paranoid projections 'outwards' return to haunt and split the place from which they are made. So long as a firm boundary is maintained between the territories, and the narcissistic wounded is contained, the aggressivity will be projected onto the Other or the Outside. But what if, as I have argued, the people are the articulation of a doubling of the national address, an ambivalent *movement* between the discourses of pedagogy and the performative? What if, as Lefort argues, the subject of modern ideology is split between the iconic image of authority and the movement of the signifier that produces the image, so that the 'sign' of the social is condemned to slide ceaselessly from one position to another? It is in this space of liminality, in the 'unbearable ordeal of the collapse of certainty' that we encounter once again the narcissistic neuroses of the national discourse with which I began. The nation is no longer the sign of modernity under which cultural differences are homogenized in the 'horizontal' view of society. The nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference.

The people turn *pagan* in that disseminatory act of social narrative that

Lyotard defines, against the Platonic tradition, as the privileged pole of the *narrated*, 'where the one doing the speaking speaks from the place of the referent. As narrator she is narrated as well. And in a way she is already told, and what she herself is *telling* will not undo that somewhere else she is *told*'.<sup>30</sup> This narrative inversion or circulation – which is the spirit of my splitting of the people – makes untenable any supremacist, or nationalist claims to cultural mastery, for the position of narrative control is neither monocular or monologic. The subject is graspable only in the passage between telling/told, between 'here' and 'somewhere else', and in this double scene the very condition of cultural knowledge is the alienation of the subject. The significance of this narrative splitting of the subject of identification is borne out in Lévi-Strauss' description of the ethnographic act.<sup>31</sup> The ethnographic demands that the observer himself is a part of his observation and this requires that the field of knowledge – the total social fact – must be appropriated from the outside like a thing, but like a thing which comprises within itself the subjective understanding of the indigenous. The transposition of this process into the language of the outsider's grasp – this entry into the area of the symbolic of representation/signification – then makes the social fact 'three dimensional'. For ethnography demands that the subject has to split itself into object and subject in the process of identifying its field of knowledge; the ethnographic object is constituted 'by dint of the subject's capacity for indefinite self-objectification (without ever quite abolishing itself as subject) for projecting outside itself ever-diminishing fragments of itself'.

Once the liminality of the nation-space is established, and its 'difference' is turned from the boundary 'outside' to its finitude 'within', the threat of cultural difference is no longer a problem of 'other' people. It becomes a question of the otherness of the people-as-one. The national subject splits in the ethnographic perspective of culture's contemporaneity and provides both a theoretical position and a narrative authority for marginal voices or minority discourse. They no longer need to address their strategies of opposition to a horizon of 'hegemony' that is envisaged as horizontal and homogeneous. The great contribution of Foucault's last published work is to suggest that people emerge in the modern state as a perpetual movement of 'the marginal integration of individuals'. 'What are we to-day?'<sup>32</sup> Foucault poses this most pertinent ethnographic question to the west itself to reveal the alterity of its political rationality. He suggests that the 'reason of state' in the modern nation must be derived from the heterogeneous and differentiated limits of its territory. The nation cannot be conceived in a state of *equilibrium* between several elements co-ordinated, and maintained by a 'good' law.

Each state is in permanent competition with other countries, other nations ... so that each state has nothing before it other than an indefinite future of struggles. Politics has now to deal with an irreducible multiplicity of states struggling and competing in a limited history ... the State is its own finality.<sup>33</sup>



What is politically significant is the effect of this finality of the state on the liminality of the representation of the people. The people will no longer be contained in that national discourse of the teleology of progress; the anonymity of individuals; the spatial horizontality of community; the homogeneous time of social narratives; the historicist visibility of modernity, where 'the present of each level [of the social] coincides with the present of all the others, so that the present is an essential section which makes the essence visible'.<sup>34</sup> The finitude of the nation emphasizes the impossibility of such an expressive totality with its alliance between an immanent, plenitudinous present and the eternal visibility of a past. The liminality of the people — their double inscription as pedagogical objects and performative subjects — demands a 'time' of narrative that is disavowed in the discourse of historicism where narrative is only the agency of the event, or the medium of a naturalistic continuity of Community or Tradition. In describing the marginalistic integration of the individual in the social totality, Foucault provides a useful description of the rationality of the modern nation. Its main characteristic, he writes,

is neither the constitution of the state, the coldest of cold monsters, nor the rise of bourgeois individualism. I won't even say it is the constant effort to integrate individuals into the political totality. I think that this main characteristic of our political rationality is the fact that this integration of the individuals in a community or in a totality results from a constant correlation between an increasing individualisation and the reinforcement of this totality. From this point of view we can understand why modern political rationality is permitted by the antinomy between law and order.<sup>35</sup>

From *Discipline and Punish* we have learned that the most individuated are those subjects who are placed on the margins of the social, so that the tension between law and order may produce the disciplinary or pastoral society. Having placed the people on the limits of the nation's narrative, I now want to explore forms of cultural identity and political solidarity that emerge from the disjunctive temporalities of the national culture. This is a lesson of history to be learnt from those peoples whose histories of marginality have been most profoundly enmeshed in the antinomies of law and order — the colonized and women.

### Of margins and minorities

The difficulty of writing the history of the people as the insurmountable agonism of the living, the incommensurable experiences of struggle and survival in the construction of a national culture, is nowhere better seen than in Frantz Fanon's essay *On National Culture*.<sup>36</sup> I start with it because it is a warning against the intellectual appropriation of the culture of the people (whatever they may be) within a representationalist discourse that may be fixed and reified in the annals of History. Fanon writes against that form of historicism that assumes that there is a

moment when the differential temporalities of cultural histories coalesce in an immediately readable present. For my purposes, he focuses on the time of cultural representation, instead of immediately historicizing the event. He explores the space of the nation without immediately identifying it with the historical institution of the state. As my concern here is not with the history of nationalist movements, but only with certain traditions of writing that have attempted to construct narratives of the imaginary of the nation-people, I am indebted to Fanon for liberating a certain, uncertain time of the people. The knowledge of the people depends on the discovery, Fanon says, 'of a much more fundamental substance which itself is continually being renewed', a structure of repetition that is not visible in the transubstancy of the people's customs or the obvious objectivities which seem to characterize the people. 'Culture abhors simplification', Fanon writes, as he tries to locate the people in a performative time: 'the fluctuating movement that the people are just giving shape to'. The present of the people's history, then, is a practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past, which is often represented in the reified forms of realism and stereotype. Such pedagogical knowledges and continuist national narratives miss the 'zone of occult instability where the people dwell' (Fanon's phrase). It is from this instability of cultural signification that the national culture comes to be articulated as a dialectic of various temporalities — modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native' — that cannot be a knowledge that is stabilized in its enunciation: 'it is always contemporaneous with the act of recitation. It is the present act that on each of its occurrences marshals in the ephemeral temporality inhabiting the space between the "I have heard" and "you will hear"'.<sup>37</sup>

I have heard this narrative movement of the post-colonial people, in their attempts to create a national culture. Its implicit critique of the fixed and stable forms of the nationalist narrative makes it imperative to question those western theories of the horizontal, homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative. Does the language of culture's 'occult instability' have a relevance outside the situation of anti-colonial struggle? Does the incommensurable act of living — so often dismissed as ethical or empirical — have its own ambivalent narrative, its own history of theory? Can it change the way we identify the symbolic structure of the western nation?

A similar exploration of political time has a salutary feminist history in *Women's Time*.<sup>38</sup> It has rarely been acknowledged that Kristeva's celebrated essay of that title has its conjunctural, cultural history, not simply in psychoanalysis and semiotics, but in a powerful critique and redefinition of the nation as a space for the emergence of feminist political and psychic identifications. The nation as a symbolic denominator is, according to Kristeva, a powerful repository of cultural knowledge that erases the rationalist and progressivist logics of the 'canonical' nation. This symbolic history of the national culture is inscribed in the strange temporality of the future perfect, the effects of

which are not dissimilar to Fanon's occult instability. In such a historical time, the deeply repressed past initiates a strategy of repetition that disturbs the sociological totalities within which we recognize the modernity of the national culture — a little too forcibly for, or against, the reason of state, or the unreason of ideological misrecognition.

The borders of the nation are, Kristeva claims, constantly faced with a double temporality: the process of identity constituted by historical sedimentation (the pedagogical); and the loss of identity in the signifying process of cultural identification (the performative). The time and space of Kristeva's construction of the nation's finitude is analogous to my argument that it is from the liminality of the national culture that the figure of the people emerges in the narrative ambivalence of disjunctive times and meanings. The concurrent circulation of linear, curvilinear, and monumental time, in the same cultural space, constitutes a new historical temporality that Kristeva identifies with psychoanalytically informed, feminist strategies of political identification. What is remarkable is her insistence that the gendered sign can hold such exorbitant historical times together.

The political effects of Kristeva's multiple, and splitting, women's time leads to what she calls the 'demassification of difference'. The cultural moment of Fanon's 'occult instability' signifies the people in a fluctuating movement *which they are just giving shape to*, so that postcolonial time questions the teleological traditions of past and present, and the polarized historicist *sensibility* of the archaic and the modern. These are not simply attempts to invert the balance of power within an unchanged order of discourse. Fanon and Kristeva seek to redefine the symbolic process through which the social imaginary — nation, culture, or community — become subjects of discourse, and objects of psychic identification. In attempting to shift, through these differential temporalities, the alignment of subject and object in the culture of community, they force us to rethink the relation between the time of meaning and the sign of history *within* those languages, political or literary, which designate the people 'as one'. They challenge us to think the question of community and communication *without* the moment of transcendence; their excessive cultural temporalities are in contention but their difference cannot be negated or sublated. How do we understand such forms of social contradiction?

Cultural identification is then poised on the brink of what Kristeva calls the 'loss of identity' or Fanon describes as a profound cultural 'undecidability'. The people as a form of address emerge from the abyss of enunciation where the subject splits, the signifier 'fades', the pedagogical and the performative are agonistically articulated. The language of national collectivity and cohesiveness is now at stake. Neither can cultural homogeneity, or the nation's horizontal space be authoritatively represented within the familiar territory of the *public sphere*: social causality cannot be adequately understood as a deterministic or overdetermined effect of a 'statist' centre; nor can the rationality of political choice be divided between the polar realms of the private and the public. The narrative of national cohesion can no longer be signified,

in Anderson's words, as a 'sociological solidity'<sup>39</sup> fixed in a 'succession of *plurals*' — hospitals, prisons, remote villages — where the social space is clearly bounded by such repeated objects that represent a naturalistic, national horizon.

Such a pluralism of the national sign, where difference returns as the same, is contested by the signifier's 'loss of identity' that inscribes the narrative of the people in the ambivalent, 'double' writing of the performative and the pedagogical. The iterative temporality that marks the movement of meaning *between* the masterful image of the people and the movement of its sign interrupts the succession of plurals that produce the sociological solidity of the national narrative. The nation's totality is confronted with, and crossed by, a supplementary movement of writing. The heterogeneous structure of Derridean supplementarity in *writing* closely follows the agonistic, ambivalent movement between the pedagogical and performative that informs the nation's narrative address. A supplement, according to one meaning, 'cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *techné*, image, representation, convention, etc. come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function' (pedagogical).<sup>40</sup> The *double entente* of the supplement suggests, however, that 'It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of* . . . . If it represents and makes an image it is by the *anterior* default of a presence . . . . the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance. . . . As substitute, it is not simply added to the positivity of a presence, it produces no relief. . . . Somewhere, something can be filled up *of itself* . . . only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy' (performative).<sup>41</sup> It is in this supplementary space of doubling — *not plurality* — where the image is presence and proxy, where the sign supplements and empties nature, that the exorbitant, disjunctive times of Fanon and Kristeva can be turned into the discourses of emergent cultural identities, within a non-pluralistic politics of difference.

This supplementary space of cultural signification that opens up — and holds together — the performative and the pedagogical, provides a narrative structure characteristic of modern political rationality: the marginal integration of individuals in a repetitious movement between the antinomies of law and order. It is from the liminal movement of the culture of the nation — at once opened up and held together — that minority discourse emerges. Its strategy of intervention is similar to what parliamentary procedure recognizes as a supplementary question. It is a question that is supplementary to what is put down on the order paper, but by being 'after the original, or in 'addition to' it, gives it the advantage of introducing a sense of 'secondariness' or belatedness into the structure of the original. The supplementary strategy suggests that adding 'to' need not 'add up' but may disturb the calculation. As Gasché has succinctly suggested, 'supplements . . . are places that compensate for a *manus* in the origin'.<sup>42</sup> The supplementary strategy interrupts the successive seriality of the narrative of plurals and pluralism by radically changing their mode of articulation. In the metaphor of the national community as the 'many as one', the *one* is now both the tendency to

totalize the social in a homogeneous empty time, and the repetition of that minus in the origin, the less-than-one that intervenes with a metonymic, iterative temporality. One cultural effect of such a metonymic interruption in the representation of the people, is apparent in Julia Kristeva's political writings. If we elide her concepts of women's time and female exile, then she seems to argue that the 'singularity' of woman — her representation as fragmentation and drive — produces a dissonance, and a disjunction, within the symbolic bond itself which demystifies 'the community of languages as a universal and unifying tool, one which totalises and equalises'.<sup>43</sup> The minority does not simply confront the pedagogical, or powerful master-discourse with a contradictory or negating referent. It does not turn contradiction into a dialectical process. It interrogates its object by initially withholding its objective. Insinuating itself into the terms of reference of the dominant discourse, the supplementary antagonizes the implicit power to generalize, to produce the sociological solidity. The questioning of the supplement is not a repetitive rhetoric of the 'end' of society but a meditation on the disposition of space and time from which the narrative of the nation must begin. The power of supplementarity is not the negation of the preconstituted social contradictions of the past or present: its force lies — as we shall see in the discussion of *Handsworth Songs* that follows — in the renegotiation of those times, terms, and traditions through which we turn our uncertain, passing contemporaneity into the signs of history.

*Handsworth Songs*,<sup>44</sup> is a film made by the Black Audio Collective during the uprisings of 1985, in the Handsworth district of Birmingham, England. Shot in the midst of the uprising, it is haunted by two moments: the arrival of the migrant population in the 1950s, and the emergence of a black British peoples in the diaspora. And the film itself is part of the emergence of a black British cultural politics. Between the moments of arrival and emergence is the incommensurable movement of the present; the filmic time of a continual displacement of narrative: the time of oppression and resistance; the time of the performance of the riots, cut across by the pedagogical knowledges of state institutions, the racism of statistics and documents and newspapers, and then the perplexed living of Handsworth songs, and memories that flash up in a moment of danger.

Two memories repeat incessantly to translate the living perplexity of history, into the time of migration: the arrival of the ship laden with immigrants from the ex-colonies, just stepping off the boat, always just emerging — as in the phantasmatic scenario of Freud's family romance — into the land where the streets are paved with gold. Another image is of the perplexity and power of an emergent peoples, caught in the shot of a deadlocked rastaman cutting a swathe through a posse of policemen. It is a memory that flashes incessantly through the film: a dangerous repetition in the present of the cinematic frame: the edge of human life that translates what will come next and what has gone before in the writing of History. Listen to the repetition of the time and space of the peoples that I have been trying to create:

In time we will demand the impossible in order to wrestle, from it that which is possible. In time the streets will claim me without apology. In time I will be right to say that there are no stories ... in the riots only the ghosts of other stories.

The symbolic demand of cultural difference constitutes a history in the midst of the uprising. From the desire of the possible in the impossible, in the historic present of the riots, emerge the ghostly repetition of other stories, other uprisings: Broadwater Farm, Southall, St. Paul's, Bristol, the ghostly repetition of the black woman of Lottell's Rd, Handsworth, who sees the future in the past. There are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories, she told a local journalist: 'You can see Enock Powell in 1969, Michael X in 1965'. And from that gathering repetition she builds a history.

From across the film listen to another woman who speaks another historical language. From the archaic world of metaphor, caught in the movement of the people she translates the time of change into the ebb and flow of language's unmastering rhythm: the successive time of instantaneity, battering against the straight horizons and the flow of water and words:

I walk with my back to the sea, horizons straight ahead  
Wave the sea away and back it comes,  
Step and I slip on it.  
Crawling in my journey's footsteps  
When I stand it fills my bones.

The perplexity of the living must not be understood as some existential, ethical anguish of the empiricism of everyday life in 'the eternal living present', that gives liberal discourse a rich social reference in moral and cultural relativism. Nor must it be too hastily associated with the spontaneous and putimoral *presence* of the people in the liberatory discourses of populist ressentiment. In the construction of this discourse of 'living perplexity' that I am attempting to produce we must remember that the space of human life is pushed to its incommensurable extreme; the judgement of living is perplexed: the topos of the narrative is neither the transcendental, pedagogical idea of history nor the institution of the state, but a strange temporality of the repetition of the one in the other — an oscillating movement in the governing *present* of cultural authority.

Minority discourse sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic *in-between* of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of 'origin' that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority. Minority discourse acknowledges the status of national culture — and the people — as a contentious, performative space of the perplexity of the living in the midst of the pedagogical representations of the fullness of life. Now there is no reason to believe that such marks of difference — the incommensurable time of the subject of culture — cannot inscribe a 'history' of the people or become the gathering points of political solidarity. They will not,

however, celebrate the monumentality of historicist memory, the sociological solidity or totality of society, or the homogeneity of cultural experience. The discourse of the minority reveals the insurmountable ambivalence that structures the *equivocal* movement of historical time. How does one encounter the past as an anteriority that continually introduces an otherness or alterity within the present? How does one then narrate the present as a form of contemporaneity that is always belated? In what historical time do such configurations of cultural difference assume forms of cultural and political authority?

### Social anonymity and cultural anomie

The narrative of the modern nation can only begin, Benedict Anderson suggests in *Imagined Communities*, once the notion of the 'arbitrariness of the sign' fissures the sacral ontology of the medieval world and its overwhelming visual and aural imagery. By 'separating language from reality' (Anderson's formulation), the arbitrary signifier enables a national temporality of the 'meanwhile', a form of 'homogeneous empty time'; the time of cultural modernity that supersedes the prophetic notion of simultaneity-along-time. The narrative of the 'meanwhile' permits 'transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar'.<sup>45</sup> Such a form of temporality produces a symbolic structure of the nation as 'imagined community' which, in keeping with the scale and diversity of the modern nation, works like the plot of a realist novel. The steady onward clocking of calendrical time, in Anderson's words, gives the imagined world of the nation a sociological solidity; it links together diverse acts and actors on the national stage who are entirely unaware of each other, except as a function of this synchronicity of time which is not prefigurative but a form of civil contemporaneity realized in the *fullness* of time.

Anderson historicizes the emergence of the arbitrary sign of language – and here he is talking of the process of signification rather than the progress of narrative – as that which had to come before the narrative of the modern nation could begin. In decentering the prophetic visibility and simultaneity of medieval systems of dynastic representation, the homogeneous and horizontal community of modern society can emerge. The people-nation, however divided and split, can still assume, in the function of the social imaginary, a form of democratic 'anonymity'. However there is a profound access in the sign of the anonymity of the modern community and the time – *meanwhile* – of its narrative consciousness, as Anderson explains it. It must be stressed that the narrative of the imagined community is constructed from two incommensurable temporalities of meaning that threaten its coherence. The space of the arbitrary sign, its separation of language and reality, enables Anderson to stress the imaginary or mythical nature of the society of the nation. However, the differential time of the arbitrary sign is neither synchronous nor serial. In the separation of language and reality – in the

process of signification – there is no epistemological equivalence of subject and object, no possibility of the mimesis of meaning. The sign temporalizes the iterative difference that circulates within language, of which meaning is made, but cannot be represented thematically within narrative as a homogeneous empty time. Such a temporality is antithetical to the alterity of the sign which, in keeping with my account of the supplementary nature of cultural signification, singularizes and alienates the holism of the imagined community. From that place of the 'meanwhile', where cultural homogeneity and democratic anonymity make their claims on the national community, there emerges a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, a minority discourse that speaks betwixt and between times and places.

Having initially located the imagined community of the nation in the homogeneous time of realist narrative, towards the end of his essay Anderson abandons the 'meanwhile' – his pedagogical temporality of the people. In order to represent the collective voice of the people as a performative discourse of public identification, a process he calls unisonance, Anderson resorts to another time of narrative. Unisonance is 'that special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests'.<sup>46</sup> And this patriotic speech-act is not written in the synchronic, novelistic 'meanwhile', but inscribed in a sudden primordially of meaning that 'looms up *impeccably* out of a horizonless past' (my emphasis).<sup>47</sup> This movement of the sign cannot simply be historicized in the emergence of the realist narrative of the novel. It is at this point in the narrative of national time that the unisonant discourse produces its collective identification of the people, not as some transcendent national identity, but in a language of incommensurable doubleness that arises from the ambivalent splitting of the pedagogical and the performative. The people emerge in an uncanny simulacral moment of their 'present' history as 'a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogeneous empty time'. The weight of the words of the national discourse comes from an 'as if were' – 'Altestral Englishness'.<sup>48</sup> It is precisely this repetitive time of the alienating anterior – rather than origin – that Lévi-Strauss writes of, when, in explaining the 'unconscious unity' of signification, he suggests that 'language can only have arisen all at once. Things cannot have begun to *signify* gradually'.<sup>49</sup> In that sudden timelessness of 'all at once', there is not synchrony but a break, not simultaneity but a spatial disjunction.

The 'meanwhile' is the barred sign of the processual and performative, not a simple present continuous, but the present as succession without synchrony – the iteration of the arbitrary sign of the modern nation-space. In embedding the *meanwhile* of the national narrative, where the people live their plural and autonomous lives within homogeneous empty time, Anderson misses the alienating and iterative time of the sign. He naturalizes the momentary 'suddenness' of the arbitrary sign, its pulsation, by making it part of the historical emergence of the novel, a narrative of synchrony. But the suddenness of the signifier is incessant, instantaneous rather than simultaneous. It introduces a signifying space of

repetition rather than a progressive or linear seriality. The 'meanwhile' turns into quite another time, or ambivalent sign, of the national people. If it is the time of the people's anonymity it is also the space of the nation's anomic.

How are we to understand this anteriority of signification as a position of social and cultural knowledge, this time of the 'before' of signification, which will not issue harmoniously into the present like the continuity of tradition — invented or otherwise? It has its own national history in Renan's 'Qu'est ce qu'une nation?' which has been the starting point for a number of the most influential accounts of the modern emergence of the nation — Karenka, Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Tzvetan Todorov. It is the way in which the pedagogical presence of modernity — the Will to be a nation — introduces into the enunciate present of the nation a differential and iterative time of reinscription that interests me. Renan argues that the non-naturalist principle of the modern nation is represented in the *will* to nationhood — not in the identities of race, language, or territory. It is the will that unifies historical memory and secures present-day consent. The will is, indeed, the articulation of the nation-people:

A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life. ... The wish of nations, is all in all, the sole legitimate criteria, the one to which one must always return.<sup>50</sup>

Does the will to nationhood circulate in the same temporality as the desire of the daily plebiscite? Could it be that the iterative plebiscite decentres the totalizing pedagogy of the will? Renan's will is itself the site of a strange forgetting of the history of the nation's past: the violence involved in establishing the nation's writ. It is this forgetting — a minus in the origin — that constitutes the *beginning* of the nation's narrative. It is the syntactical and rhetorical arrangement of this argument that is more illuminating than any frankly historical or ideological reading. Listen to the complexity of this form of forgetting which is the moment in which the national will is articulated: 'yet every French citizen has to have forgotten [is obliged to have forgotten] Saint Bartholomew's Night's Massacre, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century.'<sup>51</sup>

It is through this syntax of forgetting — or being obliged to forget — that the problematic identification of a national people becomes visible. The national subject is produced in that place where the daily plebiscite — the unitary number — circulates in the grand narrative of the will. However, the equivalence of will and plebiscite, the identity of part and whole, past and present, is cut across by the 'obligation to forget', or forgetting to remember. This is again the moment of anteriority of the nation's sign that entirely changes our understanding of the pastness of the past, and the unified present of the will to nationhood. We are in a discursive space similar to that moment of unisonance in Anderson's argument when the homogeneous empty time of the nation's 'meanwhile'

is cut across by the ghostly simultaneity of a temporality of doubling and repetition. To be obliged to forget — in the construction of the national present — is not a question of historical memory; it is the construction of a discourse on society that *performs* the problematic totalization of the national will. That strange time — forgetting to remember — is a place of 'partial identification' inscribed in the daily plebiscite which represents the performative discourse of the people. Renan's pedagogical return to the will to nationhood is both constituted and confronted by the circulation of numbers in the plebiscite which break down the identity of the will — it is an instance of the supplementary that 'adds to' without 'adding up'. May I remind you of Lefort's suggestive description of the ideological impact of suffrage in the nineteenth century, where the danger of numbers was considered almost more threatening than the mob: 'the idea of number as such is opposed to the idea of the substance of society. Number breaks down unity, destroys identity.'<sup>52</sup> It is the repetition of the national sign as numerical succession rather than synchrony that reveals that strange temporality of disavowal implicit in the national memory. Being obliged to forget becomes the basis for remembering the nation, peopling it anew, imagining the possibility of other contending and liberating forms of cultural identification.

Anderson fails to locate the alienating time of the arbitrary sign in his naturalized, nationalized space of the imagined community. Although he borrows his notion of the homogeneous empty time of the nation's modern narrative from Walter Benjamin, he fails to read that profound ambivalence that Benjamin places deep within the utterance of the narrative of modernity. Here, as the pedagogies of life and will contest the perplexed histories of the living people, their cultures of survival and resistance, Benjamin introduces a non-synchronous, incommensurable gap in the midst of storytelling. From this split in the utterance, from the unbecoming, belated novel there emerges an ambivalence in the narration of modern society that repeats, uncounselled and unconsolable, in the midst of plebeity.

The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounselled and cannot counsel others. To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life. In the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of this fullness, the novel gives evidence of the profound perplexity of the living.<sup>53</sup>

It is from this incommensurability in the midst of the everyday that the nation speaks its disjunctive narrative. It begins, if that's the word, from that anterior space within the arbitrary sign which disturbs the homogenizing myth of cultural anonymity. From the margins of modernity, at the insurmountable extremes of storytelling, we encounter the question of cultural difference as the perplexity of living, and writing, the nation.

### Cultural difference

Despite my use of the term 'cultural difference', I am not attempting to unify a body of theory, nor to suggest the mastery of a sovereign form of 'difference'. I am attempting some speculative fieldnotes on that intermittent time, and interstitial space, that emerges as a structure of undecidability at the frontiers of cultural hybridity. My interest lies only in that movement of meaning that occurs in the writing of the uncanny articulated in difference. I am attempting to discover the uncanny moment of cultural difference that emerges in the process of enunciation.

Perhaps it is like the over-familiar that constantly eludes one; those familiar transparencies, which, although they conceal nothing in their density, are nevertheless not entirely clear. The enunciativ level emerges in its very proximity.<sup>54</sup>

Cultural difference must not be understood as the free play of polarities and pluralities in the homogeneous empty time of the national community. It addresses the jarring of meanings and values generated in-between the variety and diversity associated with cultural plenitude; it represents the process of cultural interpretation formed in the perplexity of living; in the disjunctive, liminal space of national society that I have tried to trace. Cultural difference, as a form of intervention, participates in a supplementary logic of secondariness similar to the strategies of minority discourse. The question of cultural difference faces us with a disposition of knowledges or a distribution of practices that exist beside each other, *Absents*, in a form of juxtaposition or contradiction that resists the teleology of dialectical sublation. In erasing the harmonious totalities of Culture, cultural difference articulates the difference between representations of social life without surmounting the space of incommensurable meanings and judgements that are produced within the process of trans-cultural negotiation.

The effect of such secondariness is not merely to change the 'object' of analysis — to focus, for instance, on race rather than gender or native knowledges rather than metropolitan myths; nor to invert the axis of political discrimination by installing the excluded term at the centre. The articulation of cultural difference intervenes to transform the scenario of articulation — not simply to disturb the rationale of discrimination. It changes the position of enunciation and the relations of address within it; not only what is said but from where it is said; not simply the logic of articulation but the *topos* of enunciation. The aim of cultural difference is to re-articulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying singularity of the 'other' that resists totalization — the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that results in political and discursive strategies where adding-to does not add-up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification. The identity of cultural difference cannot, therefore, exist autonomously in relation to an object or a practice 'in-itself', for the identification of the subject of cultural

discourse is dialogical or transnational in the style of psychoanalysis. It is constituted through the *locus* of the Other which suggests both that the object of identification is ambivalent, and, more significantly, that the agency of identification is never pure or holistic but always constituted in a process of substitution, displacement or projection.

Cultural difference does not simply represent the contention between oppositional contents or antagonistic traditions of cultural value. Cultural difference introduces into the process of cultural judgement and interpretation that sudden shock of the successive, nonsynchronous time of signification, or the interruption of the supplementary question that I elaborated above. The very possibility of cultural contestation, the ability to shift the ground of knowledges, or to engage in the 'war of position', depends not only on the refutation or substitution of concepts. The analytic of cultural difference attempts to engage with the 'anterior' space of the sign that structures the symbolic language of alternative, antagonistic cultural practices. To the extent to which all forms of cultural discourse are subject to the rule of signification, there can be no question of a simple negation or sublation of the contradictory or oppositional instance. Cultural difference marks the establishment of new forms of meaning, and strategies of identification, through processes of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the difference of itself. The signs of cultural difference cannot then be unitary or individual forms of identity because their continual implication in other symbolic systems always leaves them 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation. What I am suggesting as the *uncanny* structure of cultural difference is close to Lévi-Strauss' understanding of 'the unconscious as providing the common and specific character of social facts ... not because it harbours our most secret selves but because ... it enables us to coincide with forms of activity which are both at *once ours and other*'<sup>55</sup>

Cultural difference is to be found where the 'loss' of meaning enters, as a cutting edge, into the representation of the fullness of the demands of culture. It is not adequate simply to become aware of the semiotic systems that produce the signs of culture and their dissemination. Much more significantly we are faced with the challenge of reading, into the present of a specific cultural performance, the traces of all those diverse disciplinary discourses and institutions of knowledge that constitute the condition and contexts of culture. I use the word 'traces' to suggest a particular kind of discursive transformation that the analytic of cultural difference demands. To enter into the interdisciplinarity of cultural texts — through the anteriority of the arbitrary sign — means that we cannot contextualize the emergent cultural form by explaining it in terms of some pre-given discursive causality or origin. We must always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological, or dialectical. The 'difference' of cultural knowledge that 'adds to' but does not 'add up' is the enemy of the *implicit* generalization of knowledge or the *implicit* homogenization of experience, to borrow Lefort's phrase.

Interdisciplinarity, as the discursive practice of cultural difference, elaborates a logic of intervention and interpretation that is similar to the supplementary question that I posed above. In keeping with its subaltern, substitutive — rather than synchronic — temporality, the subject of cultural difference is neither pluralistic nor relativistic. The frontiers of cultural difference are always belated or secondary in the sense that their hybridity is never simply a question of the admixture of pre-given identities or essences. Hybridity is the perplexity of the living as it interrupts the representation of the fullness of life; it is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign — 'the minus in the origin' — through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization. Interdisciplinarity is the acknowledgement of the emergent moment of culture produced in the ambivalent movement between the pedagogical and performative address, so that it is never simply the harmonious addition of contents or contexts that augment the positivity of a pre-given disciplinary or symbolic *présence*. In the restless drive for cultural translation, hybrid sites of meaning open up a cleavage in the language of culture which suggests that the similitude of the *symbol* as it plays across cultural sites must not obscure the fact that repetition of the *sign* is, in each specific social practice, both different and differential. It is in this sense that the enunciation of cultural difference emerges in its *proximity*, to traduce Foucault, we must not seek it in the 'visibility' of difference for it will elude us in that enigmatic transparency of writing that conceals nothing in its density but is nevertheless not clear.

Cultural difference emerges from the borderline moment of translation that Benjamin describes as the 'foreignness of languages'.<sup>56</sup> Translation represents only an extreme instance of the figurative fate of writing that repeatedly generates a movement of equivalence between representation and reference, but never gets beyond the equivocation of the sign. The 'foreignness' of language is the nucleus of the untranslatable that goes beyond the transparency of subject matter. The transfer of meaning can never be total between differential systems of meaning, or within them, for the language of translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. . . . [it] signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien'.<sup>57</sup> It is too often the slippage of signification that is celebrated, at the expense of this disturbing alienation, or overpowering of content. The erasure of content in the invisible but insistent structure of linguistic difference does not lead us to some general, formal acknowledgement of the function of the sign. The ill fitting robe of language alienates content in the sense that it deprives it of an immediate access to a stable or holistic reference 'outside' itself — in society. It suggests that social conditions are themselves being reinscribed or reconstituted in the very act of enunciation, revealing the instability of any division of meaning into an inside and outside. Content becomes the alien *mise en scène* that reveals the signifying structure of linguistic difference which is never seen for itself, but only glimpsed in the gap or the gaping of the garment. Benjamin's

argument can be elaborated for a theory of cultural difference. It is only by engaging with what he calls the 'purer linguistic air' — the anteriority of the sign — that the reality-effect of content can be overpowered which then makes all cultural languages 'foreign' to themselves. And it is from this foreign perspective that it becomes possible to inscribe the specific locality of cultural systems — their incommensurable differences — and through that apprehension of difference, to perform the act of cultural translation. In the act of translation the 'given' content becomes alien and estranged; and that, in its turn, leaves the language of translation *Aufgabe*, always confronted by its double, the untranslatable — alien and foreign.

### The foreignness of languages

At this point I must give way to the *vox populi*: to a relatively unspoken tradition of the people of the pagus — colonialists, postcolonials, migrants, minorities — wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation. They are Marx's reserve army of migrant labour who by speaking the foreignness of language split the patriotic voice of unisonance and become Nietzsche's mobile army of metaphors, metaphors, and anthropomorphisms. They articulate the death-in-life of the idea of the 'imagined community' of the nation, the worn-out metaphors of the resplendent national life now circulate in another narrative of entry permits and passports and work permits that at once preserve and proliferate, bind and breach the human rights of the nation. Across the accumulation of the history of the west there are those people who speak the encrypted discourse of the melancholic and the migrant. There is a voice that opens up a void in some ways similar to what Abraham and Torok describe as a radical *antimetaphoric*: 'the destruction in fantasy, of the very act that makes metaphor possible — the act of putting the original oral void into words, the act of introjection'.<sup>58</sup> The lost object — the national *Heim* — is repeated in the void that at once prefigures and pre-empted the 'unisonant', which makes it *unheimlich*; analogous to the incorporation that becomes the daemonic double of introjection and identification. The object of loss is written across the bodies of the people, as it repeats in the silence that speaks the foreignness of language. A Turkish worker in Germany: in the words of John Berger:

His migration is like an event in a dream dreamt by another. The migrant's intentionality is permeated by historical necessities of which neither he nor anybody he meets is aware. That is why it is as if his life were dreamt by another. . . . Abandon the metaphor. . . . They watch the gestures made and learn to imitate them. . . . the repetition by which gesture is laid upon gesture, precisely but incoherently, the pile of gestures being stacked minute by minute, hour by hour is exhausting. The rate of work allows no time to prepare for the gesture. The body loses its mind in the gesture. How opaque the disguise of

words. . . . He treated the sounds of the unknown language as if they were silence. To break through his silence. He learnt twenty words of the new language. But to his amazement at first, their meaning changed as he spoke them. He asked for coffee. What the words signified to the barman was that he was asking for coffee in a bar where he should not be asking for coffee. He learnt girl. What the word meant when he used it, was that he was a randy dog. Is it possible to see through the opaqueness of the words?<sup>29</sup>

Through the opaqueness of words we confront the historical memory of the western nation which is 'obliged to forget'. Having begun this essay with the nation's need for metaphor, I want to turn now to the desolate silences of the wandering people; to that 'oral void' that emerges when the Turk abandons the metaphor of a *heimlich* national culture: for the Turkish immigrant the final return is mythic, we are told. 'It is the stuff of longing and prayers . . . as imagined it never happens. There is no final return'.<sup>30</sup>

In the repetition of gesture after gesture, the dream dreamt by another, the mythical return, it is not simply the figure of repetition that is *unheimlich*, but the Turk's desire to survive, to name, to fix – which is unnamed by the gesture itself. The gesture continually overlaps and accumulates, without adding up to a knowledge of work or labour. Without the language that bridges knowledge and act, without the objectification of the social process, the Turk leads the life of the double, the automaton. It is not the struggle of master and slave, but in the mechanical reproduction of gestures a mere imitation of life and labour. The opacity of language fails to translate or break through his silence and 'the body loses its mind in the gesture'. The gesture repeats and the body returns now, shrouded not in silence but eerily untranslated in the racist site of its enunciation: to say the word 'girl' is to be a randy dog, to ask for coffee is to encounter the colour bar.

The image of the body returns where there should only be its trace, as sign or letter. The Turk as dog is neither simply hallucination or phobia: it is a more complex form of social fantasy. Its ambivalence cannot be read as some simple racist/sextist projection where the white man's guilt is projected on the black man; his anxiety contained in the body of the white woman whose body screens (in both senses of the word) the racist fantasy. What such a reading leaves out is precisely the axis of identification – the desire of a man (white) for a man (black) – that underwrites that utterance and produces the paranoid 'delusion of reference', the man-dog that confronts the racist language with its own alterity, its foreignness.

The silent Other of gesture and failed speech becomes what Freud calls that 'haphazard member of the herd',<sup>31</sup> the Stranger, whose languageless presence evokes an archaic anxiety and aggressivity by impeding the search for narcissistic love-objects in which the subject can rediscover himself, and upon which the group's *amour propre* is based. If the immigrants' desire to 'imitate' language produces one void in the

articulation of the social space – making present the opacity of language, its untranslatable residue – then the racist fantasy, which disavows the ambivalence of its desire, opens up another void in the present. The migrant's silence elicits those racist fantasies of purity and persecution that must always return from the Outside, to estrange the present of the life of the metropolis; to make it strangely familiar. In the process by which the paranoid position finally voids the place from where it speaks, we begin to see another history of the German language.

If the experience of the Turkish *Gastarbeiter* represents the radical incommensurability of translation, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* attempts to redefine the boundaries of the western nation, so that the 'foreignness of languages' becomes the inescapable cultural condition for the enunciation of the mother-tongue. In the 'Rosa Diamond' section of *The Satanic Verses* Rushdie seems to suggest that it is only through the process of *dissemiNation* – of meaning, time, peoples, cultural boundaries and historical traditions – that the radical alterity of the national culture will create new forms of living and writing. 'The trouble with the English is that their history happened overseas, so they don't know what it means'.<sup>32</sup>

S. S. Siosida the soak – known also as Whisky Siosida – stutters these words as part of his litany of 'what's wrong with the English'. The spirit of his words flashes out the argument of this essay. I have suggested that the staccato national past and its language of archaic belonging marginalizes the present of the 'modernity' of the national culture, rather like suggesting that history happens 'outside' the centre and core. More specifically I have argued that appeals to the national past must also be seen as the anterior space of signification that 'singularizes' the nation's cultural totality. It introduces a form of alterity of address that Rushdie embodies in the double narrative figures of Gibreel Farishita/Saladin Chamcha, or Gibreel Farishita/Sir Henry Diamond, which suggests that the national narrative is the site of an ambivalent identification; a margin of the uncertainty of cultural meaning that may become the space for an agnostic minority position. In the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of this fullness, the novel gives evidence of the profound perplexity of the living. Gifted with phantom sight, Rosa Diamond, for whom repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity, represents the English *Heim* or homeland. The pageant of a 900 year-old history passes through her frail translucent body and inscribes itself, in a strange splitting of her language, 'the well-worn phrases, *unfished business, grandstand view*, made her feel solid, unchanging, sempiternal, instead of the creature of cracks and absences she knew herself to be'.<sup>33</sup>

Constructed from the well-worn pedagogies and pedigrees of national unity – her vision of the Battle of Hastings is the anchor of her being – and, at the same time, patched and fractured in the incommensurable perplexity of the nation's living, Rosa Diamond's green and pleasant garden is the spot where Gibreel Farishita lands when he falls out from the belly of the Boeing over clothes, southern England.

Gibreel masquerades in the clothes of Rosa's dead husband, Sir Henry



Diamond, ex-colonial landowner, and through this post-colonial mimicry, exacerbates the discursive split between the image of a communist national history and the 'cracks and absences' that she knew herself to be. What emerges, at one level, is a popular tale of secret, adulterous Argentinian amours, passion in the pampas with Martín de la Cruz. What is more significant and in tension with the exoticism, is the emergence of a hybrid national narrative that turns the nostalgic past into the disruptive anterior and displaces the historical present — opens it up to other histories and incommensurable narrative subjects. The cut or split in enunciation — underlining all acts of utterance — emerges with its iterative temporality to reinscribe the figure of Rosa Diamond in a new and terrifying avatar. Gibreel, the migrant hybrid in masquerade, as Sir Henry Diamond, mimics the collaborative colonial ideologies of patriotism and patriarchy, depriving those narratives of their imperial authority. Gibreel's returning gaze crosses out the synchronous history of England, the essentialist memories of William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hasting. In the middle of an account of her punctual domestic routine with Sir Henry — sherry always at six — Rosa Diamond is overtaken by another time and memory of narration and through the 'grandstand view' of imperial history you can hear its cracks and absences speak with another voice:

Then she began without bothering with once upon a time and whether it was all true or false he could see the fierce energy that was going into the telling . . . this memory jumbled rag-bag of material was in fact the very heart of her, her self-portrait . . . So that it was not possible to distinguish memories from wishes, guilty reconstructions from confessional truths, because even on her deathbed Rosa Diamond did not know how to look her history in the eye.<sup>64</sup>

And what of Gibreel Farishta? Well he is the mote in the eye of history, its blind spot that will not let the nationalist gaze settle centrally. His mimicry of colonial masculinity and mimesis allows the absences of national history to speak in the ambivalent, ragbag narrative. But it is precisely this 'narrative sorcery' that established Gibreel's own re-entry into contemporary England. As the belated post-colonial he marginalizes and singularizes the totality of national culture. He is the history that happened elsewhere, overseas; his postcolonial, migrant presence does not evoke a harmonious patchwork of cultures, but articulates the narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look at itself narcissistically in the eye. For the liminality of the western nation is the shadow of its own finitude: the colonial space played out in the imaginative geography of the metropolitan space; the repetition or return of the margin of the postcolonial migrant to alienate the holism of history. The postcolonial space is now 'supplementary' to the metropolitan centre; it stands in a subaltern, adjunct relation that doesn't aggrandise the *presence* of the west but redraws its frontiers in the menacing, agonistic boundary of cultural difference that never quite adds up, always less than one nation and double.

From this splitting of time and narrative emerges a strange, empowering knowledge for the migrant that is at once schizoid and subversive. In his guise as the Archangel Gibreel he sees the bleak history of the metropolis: 'the angry present of masks and parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable, unreflected burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future'.<sup>65</sup> From Rosa Diamond's de-centred narrative 'without bothering with once upon a time' Gibreel becomes — however insanely — the principle of avenging repetition: 'These powerless English! — Did they not think that their history would return to haunt them?' — 'The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor' (Fanon). . . . He would make this land anew. He was the Archangel, Gibreel — *And I'm back*.<sup>66</sup>

If the lesson of Rosa's narrative is that the national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and the displacement of narratives, then through Gibreel, the avenging migrant, we learn the ambivalence of cultural difference: it is the articulation *through* incommensurability that structures all narratives of identification, and all acts of cultural translation.

He was joined to the adversary, their arms locked around one another's bodies, mouth to mouth, head to tail . . . No more of these England induced ambiguities: those Biblical-satanic confusions . . . Quran 18:50 there it was as plain as the day . . . How much more practical, down to earth comprehensible . . . [his/Shaitan standing for darkness; Gibreel for the light . . . O most devilish and slippery of cities . . . Well then the trouble with the English was their, Their — In a word Gibreel solemnly pronounces, that most naturalised sign of cultural difference. . . . The trouble with the English was their . . . in a word . . . their weather.<sup>67</sup>

### The English weather

To end with the English weather is to invoke, at once, the most changeable and immanent signs of national difference. It encourages memories of the 'deep' nation crafted in chalk and limestone; the quilted downs; the moors menaced by the wind; the quiet cathedral towns; that corner of a foreign field that is forever England. The English weather also revives memories of its daemonic double: the heat and dust of India; the dark emptiness of Africa; the tropical chaos that was deemed despotic and ungovernable and therefore worthy of the civilizing mission. These imaginative geographies that spanned countries and empires are changing; those imagined communities that played on the unsanctioned boundaries of the nation are singing with different voices. If I began with the scattering of the people across countries, I want to end with their gathering in the city. The return of the diasporic; the postcolonial.

*Handsworth Song*; Fanon's manichean colonial Algiers; Rushdie's tropicalized London, grotesquely renamed *Ellowen Drouen* in the migrant's mimicry: it is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the

epitaphic come to change the history of the nation. If I have suggested that the people emerge in the finitude of the nation, marking the liminality of cultural identity, producing the double-edged discourse of priorities and temporalities, then in the west, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. It is there that, in the narrative graftings of my essay I have attempted no general theory, only a certain productive tension of the perplexity of language in various locations of living. I have taken the measure of Fanon's occult instability and Kristeva's parallel times into the 'incommensurable narrative' of Benjamin's modern storyteller to suggest no salvation, but a strange cultural survival of the people. For it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity. I want to end with a much translated fragment from Walter Benjamin's essay, *The Task of the Translator*. I hope it will now be read from the nation's edge, through the sense of the city, from the periphery of the people, in culture's transnational dissemination:

Fragments of a vessel in order to be articulated together must follow one another in the smallest details although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the original, it must lovingly and in detail, form itself according to the manner of meaning of the original, to make them both recognisable as the broken fragments of the greater language; just as fragments are the broken parts of a vessel.<sup>88</sup>

## Notes

- 1 In memory of Paul Moritz Strümpel (1914–87): Pforzheim – Paris – Zurich – Ahmedabad – Bombay – Milan – Lugano.
- 2 I am thinking of Eric Hobsbawm's great history of the 'long nineteenth century', especially *The Age of Capital 1848–1875* (London: Wadsworth & Nicolson, 1975) and *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (London: Wadsworth & Nicolson, 1987). See especially some of the suggestive ideas on the nation and migration in the latter volume, ch. 6.
- 3 E. Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 39.
- 4 F. Jameson, 'Third World literature in the era of multinational capitalism', *Social Text*, (Fall 1986).
- 5 J. Kristeva, 'A new type of intellectual: the dissident', in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 298.
- 6 E. Said, 'Opponents, audiences, constituencies and community', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1983), p. 145.
- 7 J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), p. 210.
- 8 B. Anderson, 'Narrating the nation', *The Times Literary Supplement*.
- 9 P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London: Zed, 1986).

- 10 E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 56.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- 12 L. Althusser, *Marx's Reading of Rousseau, Marx* (London: Verso, 1972), p. 78.
- 13 M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, trans. V. W. McGee (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 31.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 36 and *passim*.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 47–9.
- 17 S. Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 234. See also pp. 236, 247.
- 18 John Barrell, *English Literature in History, 1730–80* (London: Hutchinson 1983).
- 19 Houston A. Baker Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987), esp. chs. 8–9.
- 20 Barrell, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 22 Richard Leffort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1986), pp. 212–14, my emphasis.
- 24 A. Giddens, *The Nation State and Violence* (Cambridge: Polity, 1985), p. 216.
- 25 N. Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 113.
- 26 R. Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 43. I must thank Prof. David Lloyd of the University of California, Berkeley, for reminding me of Williams' important concept.
- 27 E. Said, 'Representing the colonized', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Winter 1989).
- 28 S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Standard Edition (London: Hogarth, 1961), p. 114.
- 29 Freud, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
- 30 J.-F. Lyotard and J.-L. Thebaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 41.
- 31 C. Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge, 1987). Mark Cousins pointed me in the direction of this remarkable text. See his review in *New Foundations*, no. 7 (Spring 1989). What follows is an account of Lévi-Strauss' argument to be found in Section 11 of the essay, pp. 21–44.
- 32 M. Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, ed. H. Gutman *et al.* (London: Tavistock, 1988).
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 151–4. I have abbreviated the argument for my convenience.
- 34 L. Althusser, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1972), pp. 122–32. I have, for convenience, produced a composite quotation from Althusser's various descriptions of the ideological effects of historicism.
- 35 Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 162–3.
- 36 F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). My quotations and references come from pp. 174–90.
- 37 J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 22.
- 38 Moi, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–213. This passage was written in response to the insistent questioning of Nandini and Praminda in Prof. Thshome Gabriel's seminar on 'syncretic cultures' at the University of California, Los Angeles.

- 39 Anderson, op. cit., p. 35.  
 40 J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 144–5. Quoted in R. Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 208.  
 41 *Ibid.*, p. 145.  
 42 Gasché, op. cit., p. 211.  
 43 Moi, op. cit., p. 210. I have also referred here to an argument to be found on p. 296.  
 44 All quotations are from the shooting script of *Handsworth Songs*, generously provided by the Black Audio and Film Collective.  
 45 Anderson, op. cit., p. 30.  
 46 *Ibid.*, 132.  
 47 *Ibid.*  
 48 *Ibid.*  
 49 Levi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 58.  
 50 This collection, ch. 2, pp. 19–20.  
 51 *Ibid.*, p. 11.  
 52 Lefort, op. cit., p. 303.  
 53 W. Benjamin, 'The storyteller', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Cape, 1970), p. 87.  
 54 M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 111.  
 55 C. Lévi-Strauss, op. cit., p. 35.  
 56 Benjamin, op. cit., p. 75.  
 57 W. Benjamin 'The Task of the Translator', *Illuminations* (London: Cape, 1970), p. 75.  
 58 N. Abraham and M. Torok, 'Introjection – Incorporation', in S. Lebovici and D. Widlocher (eds), *Psychoanalysis in France* (London: International Universities Press, 1980), p. 10.  
 59 J. Berger, *A Seventh Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975). I have composed this passage from quotations that are scattered through the text.  
 60 Berger, op. cit., p. 216.  
 61 S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Ego*, Standard Edition vol. XVIII (London: Hogarth, 1961), p. 119.  
 62 S. Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Viking, 1988), p. 337.  
 63 *Ibid.*, p. 130.  
 64 *Ibid.*, p. 145.  
 65 *Ibid.*, p. 320.  
 66 *Ibid.*, p. 353.  
 67 *Ibid.*, p. 354. I have slightly altered the presentation of this passage to fit in with the sequence of my argument.  
 68 Timothy Bahiti and Andrew Benjamin have translated this much-discussed passage for me. What I want to emphasize is a form of the articulation of cultural difference that Paul de Man clarifies in his reading of Walter Benjamin's complex image of amorphia.  
 ([Benjamin] is not saying that the fragments constitute a totality, he says that fragments are fragments, and that they remain essentially fragmentary. They follow each other metonymically, and they never constitute a totality. Paul de Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 91
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